

AMERICA'S MAD-COW TIME BOMB

April 15-28, 1996

# IN THESE TIMES

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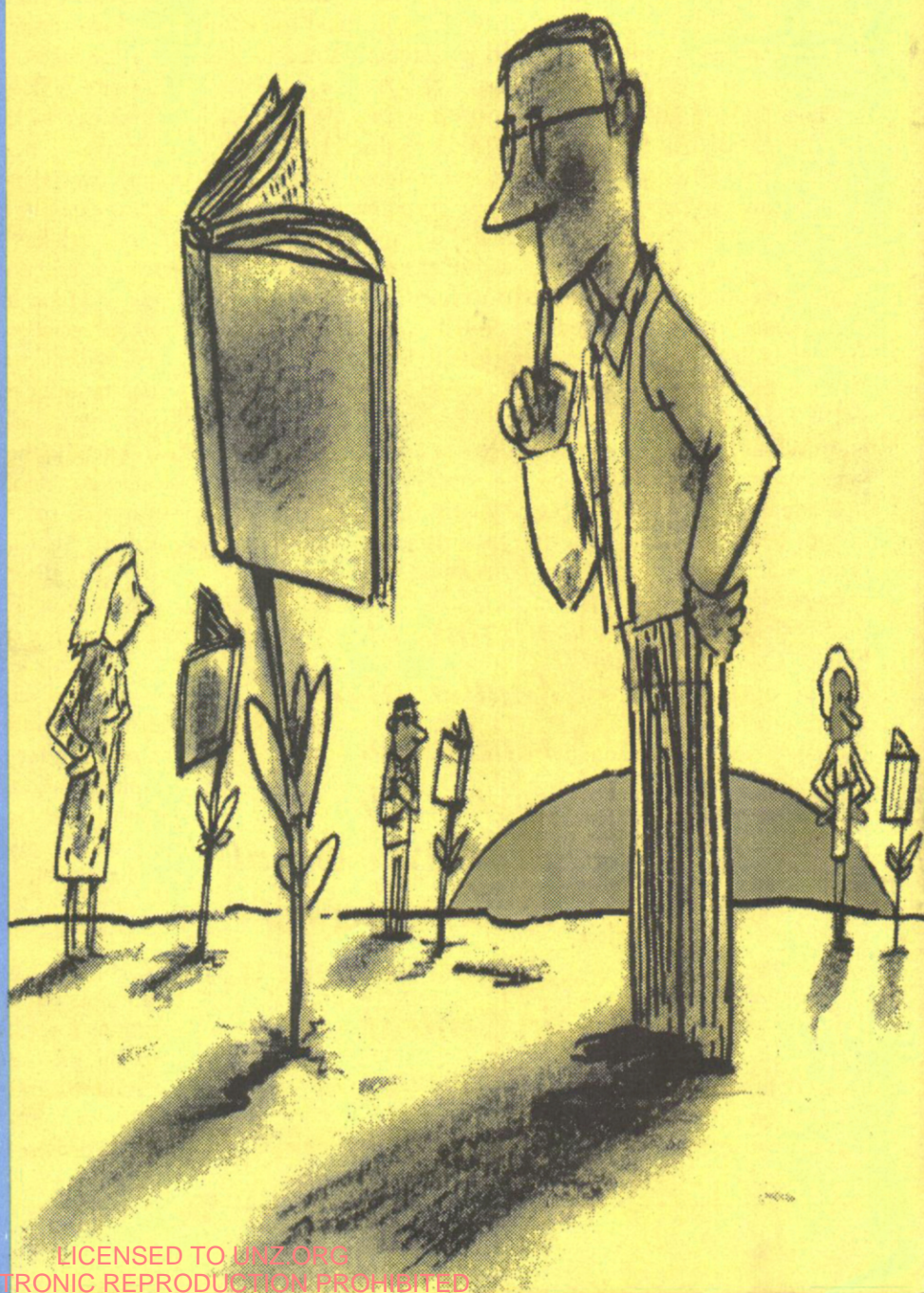
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# EDITORIAL

## THE CHICKENS COME HOME TO ROOST

For 42 years, ever since President Dwight D. Eisenhower ordered the CIA to overthrow the democratically elected government of Jacobo Arbenz, Guatemalans have lived under a reign of terror. During these years, the Guatemalan army—its arms paid for with American taxpayers' dollars and its leaders trained in the United States—killed an estimated 110,000 people, mostly Maya Indians. For decades, the army has been the true ruler of the nation. As the *New York Times* reported last month, Guatemala's two past presidents, when faced with threatened cutoffs of military aid because of publicity about the murders of one American citizen and the husband of another, felt "powerless to crack down on the army." Fearing a military coup if they pressed too hard to prosecute the American-trained officers responsible for the murders, Guatemalan leaders allowed the cases to fester in obscurity.

But the killing of American innkeeper Michael DeVine in 1990, and of guerrilla leader Efraín Bámaca, the husband of American lawyer Jennifer Harbury—became a cause célèbre last year when Rep. Robert Torricelli (D-NJ) accused Guatemalan Col. Julio Alpírez, a CIA "asset," of ordering both deaths. Coming at a time when the CIA was already under attack for a multitude of sins, these revelations embarrassed the governments of both the United States and Guatemala. One result of the killings and the cover-ups was a belated cutoff of millions of dollars in military aid to Guatemala, first of public aid and finally, last year, of the untold sums of money secretly funneled to Guatemalan officers by the CIA.

Col. Alpírez has been implicated in both the DeVine and Bámaca cases, but he is not the CIA's only Guatemalan asset who has been

*Victims of  
Guatemalan  
repression  
continue to  
expose the brutal  
consequences of  
American policy  
in Central  
America.*

involved in terrorizing Americans. Ursuline Sister Dianna Mae Ortiz is conducting a vigil in front of the White House to force the Clinton administration to release its investigative files on her case and others. In November 1989, Ortiz was abducted in Guatemala City. She was stripped, raped and repeatedly burned under the direction of a man she believes is an American. At one point she was lowered into an open pit packed with human bodies, some headless, some still alive. In a 1991 civil suit, a U.S. court found Gen. Hector Alejandro Gramajo, Guatemala's defense minister, responsible for Ortiz's ordeal and ordered him

to pay \$47.5 million in damages. The general, also presumed to be a CIA asset, was trained at the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Ga. He has ignored the order and attributes Ortiz's more than 100 burn marks to a failed lesbian love affair.

In the face of the heroic actions of people like Harbury, DeVine's widow and Ortiz, military aid to Guatemala has temporarily been suspended. This, in turn, has led Guatemala's new president, Alvaro Arzú, to try to smooth things over. A large landowner and a modernizer, he would like to clean up Guatemala's international image and make the country less of an embarrassment to the Clinton administration and to foreign investors. To achieve these ends, Arzú will have to stop the more extreme human rights violations, especially those involving American citizens.

He will also have to find a way to quiet the country's domestic upheavals, by building on an earlier commitment from the Guatemalan rebels to cease offensive action. Accordingly, the Arzú government has ordered the army to stop its counterinsurgency activities, and to abide by its constitutional role—at least until the brouhaha blows over. Even so, Arzú has aggressively pushed confrontations with campesino groups peacefully occupying unused land.

The war in Guatemala—and the litany of brutality in defense of the traditional oligarchy and American military and corporate interests—is not unique. In its basic outlines it is a near-universal story throughout Central America. In Panama, Honduras and El Salvador, the army has also been the ruling force; its officers have also been trained at Fort Benning, Ga., and recruited there as paid assets by the CIA. In short, the United States has taught these butchers their trade and supplied them with the arms and other equipment that has enabled them to dominate their countries in the service of ruling classes at home and investment capital abroad.

For decades, U.S. policy in Central America was rationalized as part of the Cold War. And in some cases, it created flashpoints in the Cold War only because American administrations forced social revolutionaries to look elsewhere for help. But the Cold War is over. There is no longer an excuse for military aid to Central America, or counterinsurgency training at the School of the Americas—except to shore up the bald defense of brutal oligarchs. ◀

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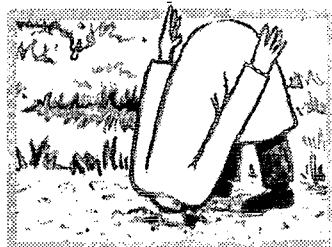
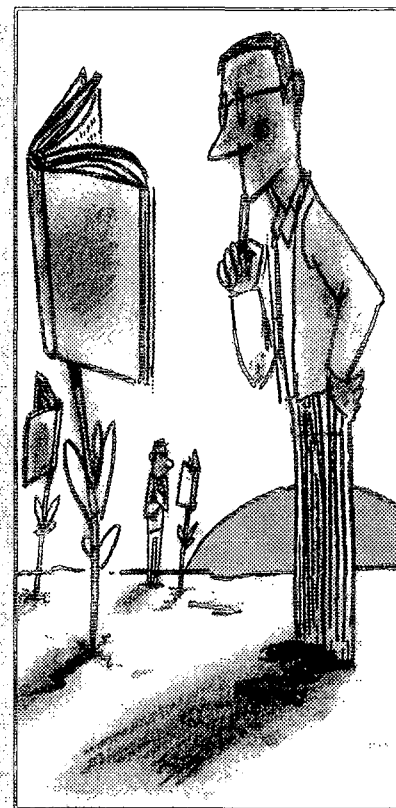
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# LETTERS

## Unocal benefits

Your "Burma online" (see "The First Stone," January 8) seriously misrepresents the Yadana offshore natural gas development project and ignores the many immediate and long-term benefits it will provide to the people of Myanmar.

The Yadana project means more than just energy development to the people of Myanmar. It also means employment opportunities, education and training, improved health care and useful new technology for thousands of people.

No one has worked as a forced laborer on the Yadana project. As project operator, Total ensures that all work conducted on the project is paid and that it is documented through labor contracts and pay records, which workers must sign after receiving their

pay directly. Wages set for the project are superior to prevailing local average wage scales. After completing basic first aid, work safety and fire-fighting training, all contract workers receive ongoing medical/preventive health care, food and potable water, and safety clothing and equipment. They are also provided lodging and hygiene facilities.

Approximately 400 local contract workers—half of whom are from the vicinity of the pipeline route—are currently employed on the Yadana project. Each of the 13 principal villages in the region—and the Burman, Karen, Mon and multiethnic groups they represent—has an equal opportunity to participate in the local project workforce. Proportional employment targets have been set for each of these villages.

Total, in consultation with Unocal, is proceeding with a wide variety of socioeconomic development programs

for people living in the pipeline region. These initiatives are providing free medical services and increasing accessibility to professional medical care (nine full-time, on-site doctors recruited for the area). They are renovating health centers and hospitals. They are establishing health care worker training and community health care projects, as well as a major malaria research project to develop a more effective anti-malarial treatment regimen.

Also, we have developed several village joint ventures involving shrimp, pig and cattle/dairy farming, a veterinary care program and technical crop assistance. These are sustainable projects that will provide long-term benefits to local families. In addition, we are renovating existing schools and establishing new ones, and are providing the furniture, supplies, teaching aids and sports facilities and equipment they need.

The project co-venturers are also implementing or planning other infrastructure and community development projects. These include bridge construction/renovation, improved water and sanitation utilities, construction of inter-village access roads and donation of transportation equipment.

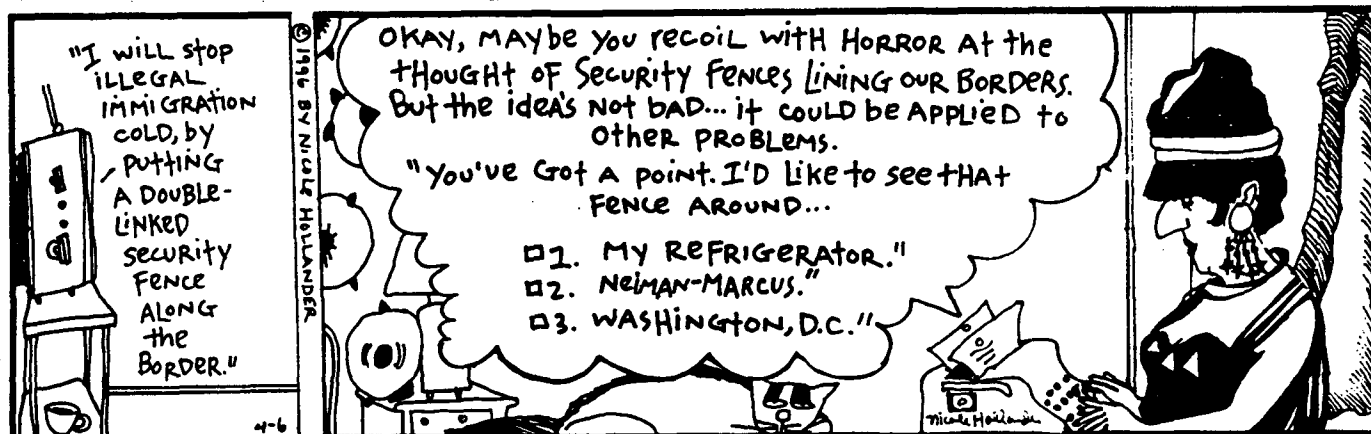
What is especially important is that we know these programs are working. To date, several other local villages have asked to participate in our regional socioeconomic development program.

David Garcia

Senior Public Relations Representative  
Unocal Corp.  
El Segundo, Calif.

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander





## Third parties

Thanks to James Weinstein for his article on current progressive third-party efforts ("Third and long," February 19). I agree that of the various third-party formations on the left, the New Party and Labor Party Advocates (LPA) "appear to be the most thoughtful."

LPA, though, lacks a political program or a political strategy. Unfortunately, this has led to a situation where some local LPA chapters are little more than coalitions of various Trotskyist sects that hope to capture a future labor party and transform it into a revolutionary socialist party. In addition, LPA has hindered its potential by confining its outreach to the labor movement.

The New Party, on the other hand, has experienced a degree of success by doing the hard work of building constituencies at the local level. The New Party is committed to the long haul, correctly understanding that a new political party cannot expect to be a significant player overnight. Moreover, the New Party has demonstrated its commitment to building a viable left by its willingness to endorse and actively support progressive Democrats.

If a progressive third party is to succeed, some of the "most thoughtful" elements currently organizing will have to merge. LPA would do well to examine the strategy and pragmatic outlook of the New Party, and, at its founding convention in Cleveland in June, begin the process of unifying the two organizations.

Rich Smith  
Seattle

## The quiet Sweeney

A certain skepticism about the new leadership of the AFL-CIO is well founded, but we should note some important changes that seem to escape the press. Quietly, Sweeney has been removing some of the most notorious violators of human rights within the American Institute for Free Labor Development, those administratively responsible for labor involvement

since the early '60s in patterns of threats, bribes, coups and generous support of repression and right-wing terrorism from South and Central America to southern Africa to Vietnam and the Philippines.

Whatever past and current leaderships may share with each other in bureaucratic instincts, the response of the tottering Old Right has been pretty dramatic. In January, American Federation of Teachers President Albert Shanker told Rhode Island unionists that he would pull his troops out of the federation if he weren't brought into the process. No one doubts that he wants to retain the traditional free hand for his Old Right cronies running the lucrative international programs (once estimated by the late Sidney Lens to involve more than \$100 million a year in secret funding) along the familiar lines, which is to say, against dissident left-wing unionists and for U.S. corporate interests. But with the Cold War over, the day of the high-powered labor spook just may be ending.

Meanwhile, the *New York Times* continues to focus on labor's connections to organized crime around a Laborer's International Union (LIU) rooted historically in the gritty coalition of ethnic communities, unionists and mobsters against Rhode Island's Yankee rulers. Predictably, the man currently on the hot seat is LIU president and self-proclaimed reformer Joseph Coia Jr., whose refusal to accept an AFL-CIO vice presidency in return for swinging a decisive vote to the bloc of Kirkland loyalists was, according to Harold Meyerson's insightful account in the *LA Weekly*, the turning point of the October convention. The real story of the past labor chief's involvement in more highly organized and wide-ranging international human rights violations has just as predictably been left fallow. Intellectuals eager to assist the revival of the labor movement might well focus on what they can do best: both investigative journalism and drawing new conclusions about the weight of labor tradition.

Paul Buhle  
Santa Cruz, Calif.

## SEIU

In his letter on John Sweeney (February 5), Staughton Lynd incorrectly describes the trusteeship of SEIU Local 399 in Los Angeles as "Sweeney's response" to the election of "an opposition slate of candidates."

Nothing could be further from the truth. The trusteeship was a response to a political deadlock that had paralyzed Local 399. While the elephants were fighting, the grass was taking a terrible beating.

Preparation for contract negotiations had been put on hold, grievances were going unprocessed, organized efforts compromised. After weeks of unsuccessful attempts to resolve the gridlock, the International Union was obligated to act in the best interests of the members of Local 399 and give them back a functioning bargaining agent.

The power struggle had absolutely nothing to do with race—both factions consisted of Latinos, African-Americans and whites.

The struggle was over power, who would occupy which jobs, how the local was structured and, hard as it is to conceive, whether or not the local should be devoting resources to organizing. A significant player in the Multiracial Alliance disagreed with the local's aggressive organizing embodied in the Justice for Janitors campaign.

These debates and struggles would have played out to their conclusion without intervention from the International had Local 399 carried out its day-to-day representational obligation to the members. That Local 399 wasn't able to meet its obligations to its members in September of 1995 required the imposition of the trusteeship.

Today the new SEIU Local 399 is rebuilding a union we are fully confident will, in the future, be identified as a model of organization effectively advocating on behalf of and protecting the rights of workers of all nationalities, ethnic groups and races.

Mike Garcia  
Chief Trustee

Local 399, Service Employees  
International Union, AFL-CIO, CLC  
Los Angeles

# InSHORT



lowing day at her fortified compound, complete with armed guards and metal detectors.

She spoke at length about gender discrimination in Iran and the NCR's political agenda for an alternative government. She also declared that "the rights of women to elect and be elected will be guaranteed" under the NCR's platform, along

with their "rights to choose their professional careers, clothing and covering, and have equal pay for equal work, as well as legal equality with men."

Rajavi was perhaps understandably vague on the NCR's plans to get to power but suggested that when the time is right, the National Liberation Army based in Iraq will launch an offensive. She argued that "the resistance movement was forced to take up arms against Khomeini soon

after the revolution. There was no other way. In the last 15 years, over 100,000 people have been executed. The regime does not allow people to protest at all. We need a revolution to change this situation."

She urged participants to lobby their governments to "boycott the

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## FUNDAMENTALS OF RESISTANCE

**M**ore than 1,000 international women's rights activists gathered in Paris last month to greet International Women's Day with a conference on "Women, Islam and Fundamentalism." The event's featured speaker was Maryam Rajavi, the exiled president-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCR). But the figure of Rajavi—and the NCR in general—triggered as many questions as shows of solidarity in the feminist community.

The first red flag, however, had been raised from a more predictable quarter. The French government, skittish about alienating Iran and losing access to the fundamentalist regime's oil reserves, forbade Rajavi

from speaking at the event, which had been sponsored by the Paris-based Women's Human Rights International Association. But some conferees were invited to meet up with Rajavi the fol-

## Democracy takes to the woods

AT LEAST ONE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATION IS EXPERIMENTING WITH something that's long passed out of fashion in the environmental mainstream: democracy. For the next couple of weeks, the 600,000 members of the Sierra Club will cast mail-in ballots to decide if the club will take up the position originally championed by club founder John Muir in the 19th century: a ban of commercial logging on federal lands.

This radical measure is the brainchild of a group called the John Muir Sierrans. "We are big supporters of the Sierra Club," says David Orr, one of the caucus founders. "The hitch is that a lot of good activists have been driven away because the club has more or less taken weak positions on critical issues over the years."

On the other side of the issue stands Sierra Club Director Dave Foreman, who argues that a logging ban would "undermine" the club's "efforts to protect the most ecologically important forests—old growth, roadless areas, endangered species habitat." The vote, which concludes on April 20, is expected to be close. —Joel Bleifuss

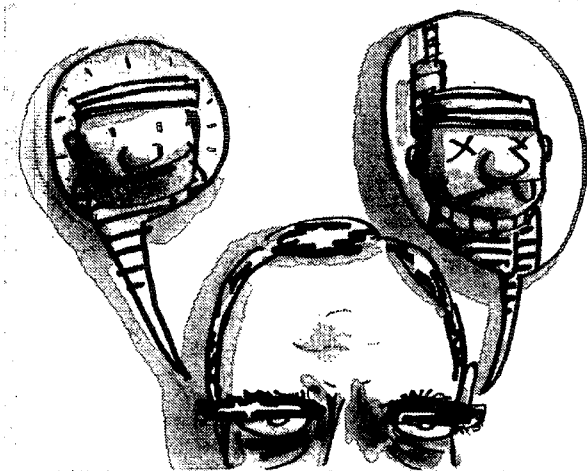


# PPALL-O-METER

THE IN THESE TIMES INDEX OF INDECENCIES

**Whatever 3.7**  
 Bob Dole would be the first to admit that Bob Dole sometimes has trouble with the eloquence thing. "I guess

who've been forgotten ... Those who have lost their sons, their daughters, as I said earlier, their brothers, sisters, whatever."



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like every human being for a fleeting moment as you walk into the prison, as you glance down death row, you pause to think about the faces you see," Dole remarked after visiting the gas chamber at San Quentin. After this little reverie, as Reuters reported, Dole quickly went on to reaffirm his support of the death penalty. "Then you see some people ... who've been the victims,

**Hanoi Joe Camel 5.2**  
 After many years as the Senate's most stubborn opponent of diplomatic recognition of Vietnam—he's still blocking funding for the U.S. Embassy there—Jesse Helms may finally be warming to the Vietnamese. At least those Vietnamese who smoke. A report in the *New York Times* detailed the North Carolina senator's recent attempts to open markets in Vietnam

for his most favored constituents—the tobacco companies. "I was with some Vietnamese recently, and some of them were smoking two cigarettes at the same time," Helms told the *Times*. "That's the kind of customers we need!"

**Stone soup 6.1**  
 The March edition of the bolsterously reactionary *American Spectator* features what is apparently intended as a ringing defense of Richard Nixon against the evil hippie heresies of Oliver Stone. "One supposes [fans of Stone's film *Nixon*] really do think that Nixon was an incompetent, venal, pill-popping, asexual, megalomaniacal drunk who bombed Cambodia because Mary Steenburgen was cold to him and plotted the assassination of Fidel Castro—thus helping bring about the death of John F. Kennedy and the destruction of his own administration," writer John H. Taylor huffs. We at *In These Times* plead innocent to these charges: we had no idea Mary Steenburgen served in the Nixon administration.

Iranian scholar at Baruch College in the City University of New York. According to Beinín, Abrahamian harshly criticizes the Mojahedin, the group that dominates the NCR. Beinín reports that the Mojahedin began as "a broad-based popular movement in the '70s and early '80s, with a critique of Western imperialism and capitalism ... but since then it has evolved into a cult ... and most of its funding comes from Iraq."

"Today, NCR leaders do not challenge the West or U.S. imperialism," Beinín himself goes on to note. "And the conference was curiously unpolitical."

Meanwhile, recent developments in Iran suggest the NCR's own politics may be missing the mark. Despite Rajavi's insistence that any resistance shy of armed revolution in Iran is impossible, articles in the *Middle East Report* document some encouraging signs of democratic popular activism. Throughout the early 1990s, uprisings by urban squatters against municipal agents seeking to evict them made a significant dent in the mullahs' monolithic rule, as has a growing traffic in forbidden publications of Iranian artists and intellectuals.

Also, in a recent interview in the *Middle East Report*, Mehranguiz Kar, a feminist lawyer from Tehran, describes a huge lobbying effort by women activists who managed to pressure the government into important reforms of Iranian divorce laws, including guarantees of equal division of property and of wages for housework. Husbands can divorce their wives only after paying these back wages, and women are even entitled to receive compensation for breast-feeding their children. Kar says that these efforts "prove that legislators and the government are open to new initiatives put forward by women."

Of course, popular resistance in Iran continues to face the obstacles of harsh domestic repression and international isolation—which makes the strong support from its sympathizers across the globe all that much more critical. Unfortunately, where the NCR fits into this picture remains unclear.

—Estee Neuwirth

regime, sever all diplomatic ties with the mullahs and support our resistance movement." Rajavi also outlined plans for open elections and more democratic economic development in an NCR-led Iran. But the cornerstone of her program is continued popular combat with the fundamentalist hierarchy.

So far, so good, for many who sympathize with the beleaguered causes of feminism and democracy in Iran. But doubts about the NCR's power base

in Iran lingered—and more disturbingly, reports of collaboration with Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime in Iraq threw the viability of the NCR's secularist, feminist and democratic project into question.

Joel Beinín, a professor of Middle East history at Stanford University who attended the Paris conference, notes that the conference's failure to address serious questions seemed to confirm the analysis of Ervand Abrahamian, an



## RIDER IN A STORM

**W**hen President Clinton signed the timber rider last July as part of a budget rescissions bill, he promised that all environmental laws governing the nation's public forests would remain in force, even though the rider sharply curtailed the rights of the public to challenge logging in court. Now, as critics point to major new clear-cutting in ancient forests thought to have been protected under law, Clinton admits the rider has had "unintended consequences" and has called for its repeal.

Critics believe that the rider was originally a low-priority issue for the

president. He vetoed the first version of the budget rescissions bill containing the rider largely on account of social funding issues. He signed the second bill despite an unsuccessful attempt by Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) to change its language on ancient forest land. Murray's effort, environmentalists say, should have cued Clinton to the rider's full implications.

One of the few environmental roll-back measures to make it through the Republican 104th Congress, the rider's impact has so far mostly been limited to the Pacific Northwest. In western Oregon and Washington, massive old trees in healthy forests are being clear-cut, even though legislators billed the rider as an emergency measure to pre-

vent forest fires by expediting removal of dead and dying trees. The new clear-cutting has spurred the largest forest-related protests in the region's history.

This spring and summer, Clinton will likely feel more pressure to act, as 248 rider-connected timber operations are slated to begin in the vital election battleground of California. "It will be a very difficult summer as [Clinton] tries to be the environmental president, and the clear-cuts start showing up on San Francisco TV," says Jim Jontz, executive director of the Western Ancient Forest Campaign, a leading national group opposing the rider.

Clinton, who will most likely need the West Coast electoral bloc to win re-election, can't afford to alienate the substantial environmentalist vote in those states. "You're not going to see them voting at all if this goes on," says Michael Donnelly, who heads Friends of the Breitenbush Cascades, an Oregon group that led a landmark ancient forest preservation campaign in the late 1980s.

In March, Clinton supported Murray's unsuccessful attempt to roll back many of the rider's worst provisions. The Murray bill would have allowed environmentalists back into court and stopped many of the ancient forest sales. But Clinton has not yet taken a strong enough stand to satisfy environmentalists.

"The president has to draw a line in the sand" and insist he will not sign a budget that does not repeal the rider, Jontz says. Clinton has been winning the public relations war with the Republicans over the budget, so the president is in a strong position to press demands, observes Jontz, a former Indiana congressman.

Meanwhile, as the logging season opens this spring, activists in the Northwest are escalating their campaign of demonstrations and direct action at logging sites. Such confrontations between angry loggers and angry environmentalists will make for interesting news coverage, but protests alone will not stop the logging.

"The real game is in the White House," says Jontz. —Patrick Mazza

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## The NAFTA aftermath

THE NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (NAFTA) IS JUST AS BAD AS progressives thought it would be, according to a new report from the Institute for Policy Studies. The 50-page study, "NAFTA's First Two Years," dissects how NAFTA has failed to deliver on all the promises that American, Mexican and Canadian leaders made to secure its approval. Contrary to the official line on the trade agreement, jobs in the signatory countries are less plentiful and less skilled, basic worker rights remain unsecured, and environmental protections are weak at best.

The report notes that the agreement's flaws are not simply failures of enforcement, however: "The social and economic picture of the past two years ... is not simply an indictment of NAFTA. It is a condemnation of an economic model that glorifies the market and that views human beings and civil society as little more than customers in a continental shopping mall. ... Of all the NAFTA myths, perhaps the most dangerous is the notion that citizens can't play a role in global economic integration. That was the message when NAFTA and GATT were negotiated behind closed doors." To obtain a copy of the report, send \$7.50 to the Institute for Policy Studies, 1601 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009. —J.B.



# MEDIA WATCH

BY JENNIFER GONNERMAN

## Image is everything

©1993 PETER HAINAN

Most major American cities now only support two daily newspapers, at best. But London is still home to more than half a dozen national dailies—and to fierce newspaper wars. Recently a new front has opened up, with the unlikely weapon of videotapes of American films.

Since mid-March, the *Times* and the *Independent* have been courting subscribers with promotions of discounted videos, at 3 pounds each, or about \$5. Featured titles include *Cocoon*, *Raising Arizona* and *When Harry Met Sally*.

Most British media watchers expect that the 10-year-old *Independent* will be the next fatality in the newspaper battles. And in what seems to be a last-ditch effort to stay afloat, the *Independent* has launched a billboard campaign in London subways, touting its video offer. Combining marketing desperation and middlebrow American humor, one ad recreates a celebrated *When Harry Met Sally* scene by having a Meg Ryan lookalike strike an orgasmic pose while reading a copy of the *Independent*.

## Thankless chores

Mad cow mania still dominates British headlines, but recently newspapers have also been giving prominent play to an old standby theme: the debate over women and work. A female London School of Economics professor recently released research suggesting that one-third of British women aspire to be homemakers. A *Daily Express* headline announced, "Feminists attack wives' champion," while the

*Guardian* proclaimed, "Feminists fall out over chores."

The professor, Catherine Hakim, claims that governmental remedies like child care are unnecessary because all women do not want to work outside the home. "It's no use inventing convenient facts to further the feminist cause," she says. "Once artificial barriers are removed, women don't necessarily choose a career over the home."

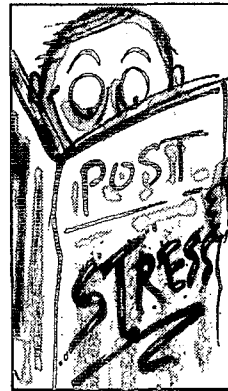
## Stressed out

Last month, Alan Ket, 25, saw his new hip-hop magazine, *Stress*, slammed in the pages of the *New York Post* for allegedly encouraging vandalism by glorifying graffiti artists. But getting attacked in the *Post* may have been the best

publicity Ket could have hoped for. The following day, he was plugging his quarterly on local television and fielding calls from dozens of potential readers.

With color photographs of spray-painted subway cars and first-person accounts by some of the city's most notorious graffiti artists, *Stress* has drawn the ire of city cops. One lieutenant told the *Post*: "It glorifies violence. And it's actually profiting from crime." A New York University student and Brooklyn native, Ket started *Stress* last November and printed 20,000 copies of the second issue, which is now on the stands. Ket says

"the response has been great" in the wake of the *Post* attack. "Now stores want to stock us, and we're almost sold out."



## TOMORROW'S NEWS TONIGHT

By Steve Brodner



Immigrant kids, thrown out of schools, still excel at English lit.: create dramatizations of "Lord of the Flies".

# INFOBAHN TOLL BOOTH

The National Writers Union (NWU) has announced the start of the first transaction-based royalty system for freelance creators in the electronic media. Under the terms of a pioneering agreement with the UnCover Co., the NWU will administer a new collective licensing agency called the Publication Rights Clearinghouse (PRC). Isabel Allende, Nicholson Baker and Todd Gitlin were among the first group of freelancers to enroll in PRC.

UnCover, a subsidiary of Knight-Ridder, Inc., is the world's largest online periodical index. The company faxes magazine and journal articles, mostly to academic researchers, from its database of 17,000 titles. Under the PRC agreement, UnCover will charge \$11.05 for each article faxed. Authors enrolled in PRC will be credited with a royalty of \$2.04, provided they have retained the rights to the work. Both union and non-union creators may enroll in PRC, but the latter will pay a

surcharge. UnCover presently faxes about 1,000 articles per day. It hopes to inaugurate a digital delivery system in the near future.

The cyberspace copyright agency establishes the NWU as a major force in the information age. "This is the silver bullet that's been missing," says NWU Assistant Director Irv Muchnick, who coordinates the PRC project. "Now we have a direct economic relationship with our members." Until now the 4,500-member, UAW-affiliated union has had to confine itself largely to advocacy. Muchnick expects that PRC will play a role in electronic publishing similar to that played by ASCAP in the music industry.

PRC represents an important victory in the NWU's campaign to end what it calls "information superhighway robbery." According to Muchnick, online publishers and database operators have been "systematically commercializing" newspaper and magazine articles written by freelancers, "completely cutting out the creator from the revenue stream."

The NWU has plunged aggressively into issues involving copyright law and

Infobahn technologies. In 1993, union president Jonathan Tasini and 10 other NWU members filed a federal class-action suit charging copyright piracy against the *New York Times*, Lexis-Nexis and other major e-publishers and database operators. That suit is now making its way through the courts.

Muchnick says the establishment of PRC will greatly strengthen the union's position in *Tasini vs. New York Times* and on copyright issues in general. "PRC shows that the writing community is conscientious about making it easy to comply with copyright law. With a collective licensing agency somebody doesn't have to write a 37 cent check every time they use something." PRC thus cuts the ground from under a claim made by the defendants in the NWU suit that it is not practical to pay royalties to freelancers when material is uploaded from print to electronic media.

Partly in response to the NWU's challenge, several major publishers, including the *New York Times*, have begun requiring freelancers to sign away all rights to reuse of their material as a condition of employment. But Muchnick sees *Tasini* as a stick held over e-publishers' heads: "We're saying to them, 'Look, if the plaintiffs prevail in *Tasini vs. Times*, in whole or in part, as we think they will, then you are going to be exposed to huge, asbestos-level damages.'" PRC, meanwhile, is the carrot: "We're saying, 'This is the face of the future—collective licensing, negotiation of standards for this new industry.'"

Muchnick hints that PRC is already negotiating with other Infobahn companies, but says he isn't ready to make any announcements yet.

PRC will operate from the NWU's West Coast office in Oakland, Calif. (phone: 510-839-0110; Internet: [nwu@nwu.org](mailto:nwu@nwu.org)). Last month, it was getting its computers connected to those at UnCover and beginning the process of verifying copyright holdings for its charter enrollees. It expects to mail the first royalty checks this summer.

—Karl Bermann



## Spiking the sixties

IS ROBERT FRY, THE DIRECTOR OF THE SMITHSONIAN Institution's National Museum of American History, angling for a job as Disney historian? Fry is busily turning the nation's leading historical institution into a highbrow version of Main Street, U.S.A.—an idea- and politics-free environment. In the wake of last year's flap over the Smithsonian's ideologically refurbished exhibit on the atomic annihilation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Fry decreed that all printed material going out under

the Smithsonian logo must be approved by him. So last fall, Fry reviewed ad copy for a six-part lecture series called "The Sixties" and pulled the plug on the project, apparently because the subject was too dicey.

Censored speakers included civil rights leader Julian Bond, anti-war demonstrator David McReynolds, folk singer Tom Paxton, and two leading critics of the national security state, Daniel Ellsberg and Marcus Raskin. The Smithsonian has provided varied and contradictory rationales for the program's cancellation, but the event's outside organizer, American University historian Allen Smith, has a much more cogent explanation: "It was political." —J.B.



# ZAPATISTARS

Hundreds of supporters of Mexico's Zapatista rebels gathered in La Realidad, Chiapas this month for a conference titled "The Continental Convergence for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism."

The official invitation, written by Subcomandante Marcos and published in Mexico City newspapers on March 10, opened on a hopeful note: "Suppose it's not true that there's no alternative. Suppose impunity and grief are not the only future. ... Suppose that some lunatics and romantics think that another world and life are possible. And then suppose something even worse, like maybe these lunatics believe that there are other lunatics who think like they do."

But despite Marcos' upbeat tone, the situation in Chiapas remains tense and uncertain. The peace accord between the government and the rebels, signed on February 16, provides for greater political autonomy for indigenous communities; for official recognition of Indian languages and bilingual education; and an end to the longstanding requirement that members of Chiapas' indigenous population must belong to a political party in order to take part in elections.

But the most explosive issues—those pertaining to land redistribution and systematic human rights violations—remain unsolved. The latest round of talks between the rebels and the government concluded in San Cristóbal de las Casas on March 24 and will begin again on April 18. The talks nearly unraveled when Zapatista negotiators accused the government of "criminal" and "corrupt" behavior following the killing of six campesinos in the Chiapan municipalities of Venustiano Carranza and Pichucalco. Soldiers and police forcibly displaced the campesinos, who were squatting on seized land. In two separate confrontations, dozens of police were injured and more than 125 protesters were arrested. On March 23, the Party of the Democratic Revolution

announced that 32 of its members have been killed in Chiapas since the beginning of the Zedillo administration in December 1994, and that authorities have yet to prosecute anyone in connection with the deaths.

The Zapatistas are clearly hoping that the conference will rekindle the flagging interest of the international press. Sympathetic coverage of the rebels peaked in the spring of 1994, when *Vanity Fair* published its lengthy profile of Marcos. Chiapas now receives about as much coverage as Pakistan, and reporters from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* have all but stopped filing stories from the region.

Accordingly, the Zapatistas attempted to lure a full complement of politically minded celebrities to the Lacandon jungle. Among the Hollywood invitees were Robert Redford, Kevin Costner, Susan Sarandon, Jane Fonda, Jodie Foster, Edward James Olmos and Francis Ford Coppola.

Other luminaries included the musicians Pablo Milanés and Silvio Rodríguez and the writers Eduardo Galeano and Mario Benedetti.

At least one American celebrity has already answered the call. On March 25, as most of the Hollywood establishment gathered at the Academy Awards ceremony, Oliver Stone was on his way to Mexico's southernmost state. Accompanied by the actress Ofelia Medina and the human rights activist Rosario Ibarra, Stone denounced the "campaign of terror" in Chiapas, and promised to call on the American government to stop providing military aid to the Mexican army. For a brief moment a small section of the Lacandon jungle took on the aura of a Hollywood set: On March 26, Stone turned up in La Realidad on horseback, wearing a black ski mask and nibbling on a pipe given to him by Marcos.

—Scott Sherman

## THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

By Peter Hannan



# THE FIRST STONE

## WHAT'S IN THE BEEF?

By Joel Bleifuss

**T**he U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) appears to be following in the footsteps of the British Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, which, after years of downplaying the human health risks stemming from mad cow disease, saw the issue erupt into a public health crisis. The British government has now admitted that human consumption of meat from cattle infected with mad cow disease—bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE)—was a probable cause of a recent outbreak of the human form of the disease, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD). As a result, the British beef industry now faces financial ruin. (See "The First Stone," May 17 and May 31, 1993 and January 24, 1994.)

British microbiologist Richard Lacey, whose track record at predicting the course of the fatal disease in the human population is now better than that of his government, maintains that CJD could reach epidemic proportions in the U.K. He has recently said, "We are now estimating that by the next century the typical number of CJD cases will run at between 5,000 and 500,000 a year."

Prodded by this alarming prognosis, the USDA has decided to institute some long overdue regulatory reform. Yet questions remain. Has the department done too little too late? Is the department acting out of concern for public health, or is it protecting the affected industries from an outbreak of public concern?

In 1991, the USDA prepared contingency plans dealing with the possibility that mad cow disease could rear its ugly head in the United States. The department, keenly aware that any battle would be fought in the court of public opinion, drew up a strategy paper titled "BSE Public Relations." That plan reads in part, "The mere perception that BSE might exist in the United States could have devastating effects on our domestic markets for beef and dairy." The plan, which was released under a Freedom of Information Act request from the Pure Food Campaign, cautions the department to "avoid public relations problems such as have occurred in the U.K." One such problem occurred when the British Ministry of Health committed the "strategic error" of initiating a

registry for Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. As the plan points out: "This [registry] appeared to legitimize concern about a link between BSE and human health."

The department seems to believe that what the public doesn't know can't hurt it. And to that end it appears to be doing all it can to avoid discovering scientific evidence that would contradict the government's official position, that BSE "does not exist" in the United States.

To back up this claim, the Agriculture Department points to its own BSE surveillance program. As of December 1995, scientists had examined the brains of 2,660 cows that had exhibited signs of neurological disease and found no evidence of BSE.

But Richard Marsh, a member of the government's Scrapie/BSE Consultants Group, maintains that this negative result proves little. According to Marsh, the department is examining the wrong cows and using the wrong diagnosis when it does so. For more than 10 years, Marsh has been trying to convince government officials that the United States is very much at risk for mad cow disease—and that, indeed, a form of the malady may already be circulating through the U.S. cattle population.

In the fall of 1985, before BSE was first discovered in British cattle, Marsh, a veterinary scientist at the University of Wisconsin, reported at the annual meeting of the U.S. Animal Health Association on an outbreak of transmissible mink encephalopathy, the mink form of BSE. The disease had wiped out a mink farm in Wisconsin, where the infected animals had been fed cows afflicted with "downer cow syndrome," which renders cows unable to get up once they have fallen down. Circumstantial evidence, in Marsh's view, indicated that a bovine form of scrapie—the sheep nervous-system malady from which Britain's BSE epidemic apparently sprang—was going undiagnosed.

For the past four years, Marsh and other scientists have repeatedly expressed concern at Agriculture Department meetings that an undiagnosed form of BSE could account for some "downer cow" deaths. In 1992, veterinary researchers in Ames, Iowa, and Mission, Texas, discovered that cattle injected with brain matter from scrapie-infected American sheep developed BSE. However, the brains of these infected cattle did not exhibit the spongy holes found in the brains of their BSE-plagued British cousins. Further, bovines afflicted with this American strain of scrapie-induced BSE do not go mad, they simply collapse and die. And that is what happens to the 100,000 American cattle that now succumb to "downer cow syndrome" each year.

Marsh feared that the widespread practice of feeding downed cows to other cattle in the form of rendered protein supplements could be fueling a BSE epidemic such as the one now gripping Britain. At least 14 percent of all rendered cattle in the United States—including downer cows—are con-



sumed by other cows in the form of protein supplements.

Government officials now appear to agree with Marsh on the potential danger of feeding cows to cows. On March 28, the USDA and the Food and Drug Administration announced that they would expedite the drafting of regulations that would prohibit the use of rendered ruminants as an animal feed supplement. And the U.S. livestock industry has said it will institute a voluntary ban until such regulations are on the books. In its public statement, the USDA said, "The measures announced today will provide an additional level of assurance that the United States remains free of BSE."

The Agriculture Department has previously considered banning the practice of feeding cows to cows. According to a 1991 internal departmental report, "BSE Rendering Policy," such a ban was supported by those staff scientists who believe "that a spongiform encephalopathy agent is present in the U.S. cattle population." But the "disadvantage" of this proposal, according to the department, was that it "could pose major problems for the U.S. livestock, feed and rendering industries"—industries that each year take in \$60 billion, \$20 billion and \$1.7 billion, respectively.

Marsh told *In These Times* that he was glad the government has now recognized the need for the ban. He also hopes the USDA will realize the need for "better surveillance." In 1992, at the June meeting of the Scrapie/BSE Consultants Group, Marsh and others asked the Agriculture Department to change the diagnostic guidelines of its BSE surveillance program. Their arguments again fell on deaf ears. The official minutes of that meeting state: "The consultant group and participants [including representatives from the National Milk Producers Federation, National Renderers Association, the American Sheep Industry Association and the National Cattlemen's Association] agreed that the current efforts are on target for the needs of the livestock and rendering industries ... and that changes in the research direction are not appropriate at this time." No representatives of consumer groups have ever participated in the consultants group meetings.

In internal documents, however, the department admits to doubts its spokespersons have never voiced publicly. In 1991, one report warned that agriculture is "vulnerable to media scrutiny" regarding "the practice of feeding rendered ruminant products to ruminants and the risk to human health" stemming from the practice. Another USDA report issued the same year held that "the potential risk of amplification of the BSE agent" through feed concentrates "is

much greater in the United States" than in Britain.

And dairy cows are most at risk. They live longer than beef cattle, and hence have more time to develop the disease. Dairy cows also eat a diet loaded with feed concentrates made from rendered animal protein. Of the 11.6 billion pounds of hamburger consumed in the United States each year, 2.6 billion pounds comes from "retired" dairy cows.

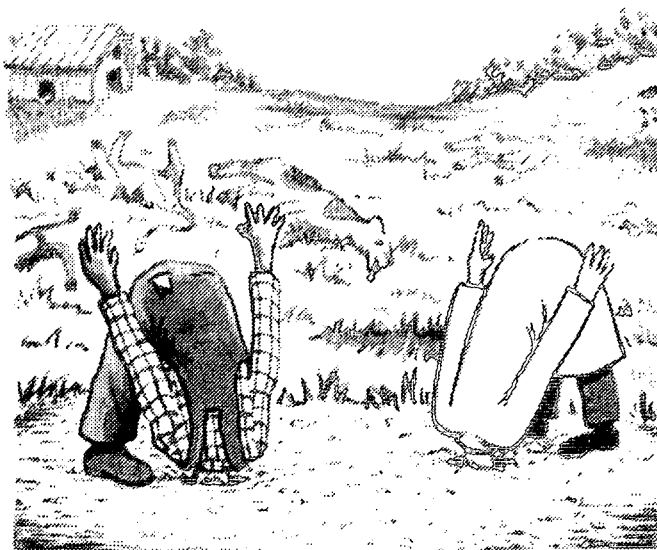
In a spate of official denials, industry and government spokesmen have dismissed all talk of a BSE threat in the United States—a line of PR obligingly parroted by the media. For instance, *New York Times* reporter Lawrence Altman filed a piece on March 27 uncritically reporting the spin control of the USDA's BSE spokesman, Will Hueston. By Altman's account, the USDA has "carefully studied the sheep-to-cow transmission possibility but has been unable to verify it in the

United States, either in theory or practice. Scrapie-infected tissue collected from sheep in this country has been injected into the brains of cattle without causing the damage typical of mad cow disease, suggesting the scrapie agent that infects American sheep may differ from that of British sheep. 'With all the work we have done in the United States so far, we have not been able to recreate a disease that fits the bovine spongiform encephalopathy picture,' Dr. Hueston said."

Like all the department's previous public announcements on BSE, this one deliberately overlooked the body of research Marsh and others have assembled, in which government-sponsored scientists using American scrapie had "recreated" a different strain of BSE, which is just as deadly but exhibits properties that do not fit the formal definition of BSE.

To its credit, the Agriculture Department has announced that in the wake of Britain's mad cow scare, it plans to "review" its "current policies and regulations concerning BSE." In Wisconsin, Marsh welcomed the announcement but says he hopes that the review is not an excuse to delay taking action. The department also has promised to expand its current BSE surveillance program. That's fine, says Marsh, as long as it accompanies the increased testing with a change in the diagnostic guidelines.

He is also cheered by the USDA's decision to support further research into BSE—a welcome reversal of previous department refusals to fund studies that would test Marsh's hypothesis. He hopes the commitment is sincere, yet he wonders: "Do the USDA and FDA feel any extra obligation with this being a potential human pathogen? Or are they going to give us the same song and dance?"



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**A F R I C A**

# Burundi's crucible

# H

ow do you halt spasmodic violence between two ethnic groups, both of which fear genocide by the other—especially when both have good reasons for their fear? That is the dilemma facing Burundi's 5.6 million people as ethnic violence escalates between the central African nation's Hutu majority and Tutsi minority.

Fear that a Rwanda-style genocide may recur in Burundi—and the shame felt by the international community for failing to stop the Rwanda genocide after it broke out in April 1994—has prompted diplomats and journalists alike to pay more attention than usual to one of Africa's more obscure and impoverished nation-states. But many governments remain deeply divided over whether, when and how to intervene directly in Burundi to stop its cycles of violence.

In a March 5 resolution, the U.N. Security Council

condemned acts of violence in Burundi and urged all sides to engage in a national debate on ways to resolve the conflict in that Maryland-sized nation. But it delayed deciding whether to impose an arms embargo until a May 1 report by the U.N. Secretary General on the progress of that debate. The State Department is currently reviewing whether the pattern of violence in Burundi meets the legal international definition of genocide and would thus require more active U.S. intervention.

In Tunis in mid-March, the Atlanta-based Carter Center convened a second meeting between the heads of state of Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire and Uganda in an effort to resolve the crises in Rwanda and Burundi. But they remain divided on many issues and achieved little beyond reiterating previous commitments, most of them still unmet.

Such international attention may help forestall, at least temporarily, the worst excesses of extremists on both sides of Burundi's Hutu/Tutsi ethnic divide. But unless the international community grasps the differences, as

well as similarities, between Rwanda and Burundi, it risks applying the wrong lessons from Rwanda to its southern neighbor. And unless the international community sufficiently backs efforts to rapidly bring to justice those guilty of violence, efforts at reconciliation may well founder.

In Rwanda, Hutu extremists killed an estimated 800,000 to a million Tutsis in three and a half months of pre-planned genocidal massacres in 1994. Burundi, by contrast, has been sliding toward a lower-intensity guerrilla war-like pattern of ethnic attacks. That violence has claimed more than 100,000 lives and forced a million people from their homes since the assassination of Melchior Ndadaye, a Hutu intellectual and Burundi's first democratically elected president, during an October 1993 coup attempt by extremist Tutsi army officers. Today, more than 200,000 Burundi refugees still live in neighboring countries, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Burundi's first post-independence governments were ethnically mixed. But in 1965, the Tutsi minority, which had long been favored by Burundi's Belgian colonial rulers, began to dominate government structures. Tutsis soon came to almost completely control the government—especially the army, judiciary and financial institutions. They reserved for themselves a disproportionate share of jobs, government loans and access to education. About a decade ago, President Pierre Buyoya, a moderate Tutsi, introduced more inclusive policies that started opening opportunities to Hutu and moving toward multiparty democracy.

But in the aftermath of Ndadaye's assassination, a continuing pattern of stop-and-start reciprocal attacks and massacres by gangs from each ethnic group (and by units of the Tutsi-dominated army) has created endemic insecurity for

*Can a small  
Central African  
country resist  
the regional  
spread of  
genocide?*

By Carole J.L. Collins



both Hutu and Tutsi in rural and urban areas. The northern region of the country has become a virtual war zone, and diplomatic sources estimate between 50 to 100 people a day are being killed during such attacks.

To many observers, the two countries' similar ethnic composition (roughly 85 percent Hutu and 15 percent Tutsi), shared history of Belgian colonial rule and similar economies suggest they are likely to follow identical paths. But these similarities obscure a number of significant differences in how their ethnic crises are evolving.

Violence in Burundi, for example, is unlikely to match the intensity and massive scale of the Rwandan genocide, or to be as one-sided. In light of Rwanda's horrors, neither side will be taken by surprise. But Burundi's stop-and-start cycle of small attacks may over time generate a cumulative toll approaching Rwanda's. "The two sides in Burundi are locked in a Cold War-style pattern of 'mutually assured destruction,'" one refugee expert on Rwanda says. "We keep looking for a massive explosion, while five to ten thousand people may be dying over several months, killed here and there."

Following a September 1994 power-sharing agreement, Burundi's government has included both Tutsi and Hutu political leaders. However tenuous their actual collaboration, they have seemingly accepted the principle of sharing power, a fact that should help bring about long-term reconciliation. Through the government's unfortunately named "pacification program," Hutu and Tutsi local and national politicians have jointly visited towns and rural areas, urging people to put aside ethnic hatreds and end retributory attacks.

But unlike Rwanda, Burundi is slowly becoming, under the pressure of these continued attacks, an apartheid-style society of physically segregated ethnic communities. As in Rwanda before the genocide, Burundi's Hutus and Tutsis used to live side by side in urban and rural areas. No more. Tutsi army units and youth gangs have driven most Hutus from Burundi's towns and urban areas. The capital city of Bujumbura is now a virtually all-Tutsi city. Hutu insurgents have similarly driven Tutsi peasants off their land; most now live in displaced persons camps within easy reach of army bases.

Most Burundian Tutsis—and, indeed, most Hutus—can't imagine peaceful coexistence. All too aware they are a minority, many Tutsis live in fear that, if they are not extremely vigilant, they may be overwhelmed and killed. *This dynamic fuels the cycle of violence on both sides and makes it almost impossible to determine exactly who is or is not an "extremist."*

The highly organized, deliberate methods of Rwanda's



genocide—and the unrepentant sentiments of most Rwandan Hutu refugees I interviewed during a visit to eastern Zaire last October—suggest that reconciliation in Rwanda will be a long time coming. Nor will that country's psychological trauma be easily healed. A UNICEF report released last month outlined the nightmarish proportions of that trauma: Of more than 3,000 Rwandan children interviewed across the country, 95 percent admitted witnessing violence and killings during the 1994 genocide. Of these, one-third saw children take part in killings or beatings, and almost as many witnessed rape or sexual assault. Almost 80 percent lost immediate family members during the war, and one-third of these witnessed the murder of family members. Unrepentance and trauma among both Hutu and Tutsi in Burundi are also impeding reconciliation efforts there.

No solution to Burundi's ethnic conflict is possible without a resolution of the Rwandan refugee crisis. Members of the Hutu *Interahamwe* militia, who played a major role in

organizing and carrying out the Rwandan genocide, still dominate many refugee camps inside Zaire and Tanzania. They have armed and trained many of Burundi's Hutu insurgents, as well as strongly influencing their worldview. Many who did not start out as extremists are now being schooled in genocidal thought and action.

As Burundi's civil war sputters, many international observers, including U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, have called for armed international intervention by a standby force. But one of the few points uniting Burundi's Hutu and Tutsi politicians is opposition to any military intervention. While some observers argue that this attitude reflects the unwillingness of both sides to seek a long-term resolution, others maintain that Burundi's best hope for peace lies in rejecting armed force as a basis for security.

Most NGOs also oppose military intervention, says Eric Olfert of the Akron, Pa.-based Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), which maintains a small program in Bujumbura. Such a policy—especially if limited to protecting the central government and foreign relief organization operations alone, as Boutros-Ghali has proposed—would undercut the local reconciliation initiatives MCC and other groups are trying to foster, Olfert says. “For NGOs working on a peace agenda, to be protected by the gun when they are asking people to think about giving up the gun is fundamentally inconsistent,” he added, noting that NGOs have also turned down the Burundi army's offers of protection.

Creating greater security for moderates of both sides engaged in reconciling their respective communities is an urgent priority. To this end, the MCC has assigned several foreign “peace presence volunteers” to accompany both Hutu and Tutsi community leaders as they set up interethnic “community peace committees.”

The top-down peace-building diplomatic strategies of the U.N. or of the Carter Center's Great Lakes Peace Initiative may be less likely to resolve Burundi's ethnic divide than more bottom-up approaches. “The kind of healing [and reconciliation] that needs to take place needs to start from the grass roots,” Olfert argues.

NGO representatives interviewed in Washington hesitate to publicly criticize diplomatic efforts. Just getting the presidents of the five Central African Great Lakes nations to meet last month in Tunis was a great accomplishment, several noted. But many are impatient with what one NGO staffer calls the tendency of “mouthing platitudes that have no practical applications on the ground.” While the Tunis conferees bemoaned Burundi's insecurity, they remained silent about the Burundi army's reported role in that insecurity. While this reticence may have kept Burundi's Tutsi politicians from walking out of the meeting, it undermined the initiative's credibility among the Hutus back in Burundi.

Bringing perpetrators of violence—both Tutsi and Hutu—to justice is essential to establishing mutual confidence among Burundians that they can live together. Prospects for rebuilding trust between Hutu and Tutsi

across the whole Great Lakes region likely rest on two current efforts to that end: the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda set up in 1994 to try those Hutu politicians and other leaders who planned and carried out the Rwandan genocide; and the U.N. International Commission of Inquiry into the October 1993 assassination of the late Burundi President Ndadaye. The success of the tribunal, which will put its first defendants on trial in May, is vital to reassuring Tutsis in both Rwanda and Burundi.

But the International Tribunal has moved slowly due to inadequate funding and delays in appointing staff, few of whom know the Kinyarwanda language. And while the Rwandan government has arrested 57,000 people for suspected involvement in the killings, it refuses to send any to the tribunal because the latter has banned the death penalty. Because virtually no progress has been made to bring the *genocideurs* to account, survivors and Rwandan government officials—and their Tutsi counterparts in Burundi—deeply distrust calls for reconciliation. “It's difficult to talk of reconciliation when you have lost all your family, and when nothing has been done so far concerning justice,” says Annonciata Nyiratamba Cyubahiro, who heads the Rwandan Association of Widows of Genocide. “How can we be reconciled when the planners of the genocide have not even demanded pardon?”

Burundi Hutus attacked by Burundi Tutsi army units have echoed these sentiments. For them, establishing even minimal trust of their Tutsi neighbors will depend on whether the U.N. International Commission of Inquiry identifies and brings to justice those extremist army officers who unleashed the spiral of ethnic violence in late 1993.

Given the limited effectiveness of diplomatic efforts thus far, how can the international community best help restore peace to the region? Human Rights Watch and other groups have urged the U.N. to impose an immediate embargo on the transfer of arms to Burundi and to extend the jurisdiction of Rwanda's International Criminal Tribunal to cover Burundi. In a February 21 letter to U.S. Ambassador Madeleine Albright, they also urged deployment of U.N. human rights monitors in the field; allowing the International Commission of Inquiry to investigate illegal arms trafficking in the Great Lakes region; and more Organization of African Unity military observers, who should be allowed to operate completely autonomously from the Burundi military.

Most important, says the MCC's Olfert, is “to take Burundi seriously.” Visits by outsiders help, he says, noting that a recent visit by Albright strongly encouraged Burundian moderates. Both the U.N. Security Council and the Carter Center will be reassessing the progress of their diplomatic efforts in May. But whether the international community will act with sufficient dispatch and effective coordination of policies to defuse Burundi's ticking time bomb remains to be seen. ◀

Carole J.L. Collins is diplomatic and U.N. correspondent for the *National Catholic Reporter*. She recently traveled on assignment to Rwanda and eastern Zaire.



## EUROPE

# The private security state

*American military policy in the Balkans is up for sale.*

By Lucian Kim

**I**n November 1994, retired Air Force Col. Ron Hatchett received a mysterious phone call from a man he says once supplied the Afghan Mujahadeen with 10,000 mules. The caller claimed to be putting together a "proposal" for the U.S. government and offered Hatchett \$100,000 to spend six months advising the Bosnian government in Sarajevo. As a former intelligence officer and arms control negotiator, Hatchett was closely following the Balkan war.

Hatchett turned the caller down because he views U.S. policy in the Balkans as duplicitous. But his offer may not have been so unusual, considering that a private U.S. company called Military Professional Resources Inc. (MPRI) had already established a vital, if shadowy, presence in Croatia.

According to a company brochure, MPRI was founded in 1987 "to bring together former military professionals from all services to perform worldwide corporate contractual functions requiring

skills developed from military service." Based in Alexandria, Va., MPRI at first focused on "doctrine development" in the U.S. army and later signed contracts with the militaries of various other governments, including Sweden and Taiwan. Citing the "very competitive" nature of the business, retired Lieut. Gen. Ed Soyster, vice president of MPRI's international operations, refuses to disclose the amount of the Croatian deal, nor will he say what other regional powers have sought out MPRI's services.

The company—which bills itself as "the greatest corporate assemblage of military expertise in the world"—appears to have gained its first foothold in the Balkans in March 1994, when Croatian Defense Minister Gojko Susak appealed to the Pentagon for assistance in training his battered army.

Susak, who as an émigré had run a pizza parlor in Canada, was ostensibly seeking to reorganize the Croatian military for eventual NATO membership. By some accounts, the Pentagon sent Susak to MPRI. Soyster denies such reports: "There was no push from the [U.S.] government."

In any case, the State Department determined that MPRI's activities in Croatia would not violate the U.N. arms embargo and issued a license in November 1994. At the same time, Secretary of Defense William Perry signed a military cooperation agreement with Zagreb. According to Soyster, the licensing process took half a year because MPRI's deal with Susak involved a "new idea"—the "democratization" of the Croatian army.

The Croats, burdened with the legacy of a puppet fascist state in World War II, would seem ideal candidates for tutelage in democracy. But rather than distancing itself from the past excesses of the Ustasha regime, the Croatian government has continued to rule in decidedly undemocratic fashion. Still, the United States saw an opportunity to "level the Balkan playing field" and to establish a U.S. presence in the Balkans while the European powers were still bickering about a common policy.

"We have the credibility of guys who have lived and breathed in a democratic army," says Soyster, a former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency. Indeed, MPRI employs some high-profile military retirees, including retired Gen. Carl Vuono, army chief of staff from 1987 to 1992, and retired Gen. Crosbie Saint, commander of the U.S. army in Europe during the Bush administration. Both Vuono and Saint were among the officers MPRI sent to Croatia to convert the "Moscow-Belgrade"-style Croatian army into a civilian-controlled, professional fighting force. In March 1995, MPRI instructors began teaching courses in Zagreb as part of MPRI's "Democracy Transition Assistance Program."

But observers of military affairs in the Balkans contend that MPRI's influence went beyond the classroom. "I think they're doing more than that," Paul Beaver, a military ana-

lyst with Jane's Information Group, says of MPRI's educational mandate. When the Croats retook the Serb-held Krajina region last August, they made a surprising show of force—a resurgence that Beaver attributes in part to MPRI.

Hatchett—the recipient of the mysterious 1994 call from the Afghanis' mule-broker—agrees with Beaver. "What is the logic that you need that many senior officers in Croatia?" he asks. "Why would [the Croats] pay millions of dollars to have those people there?"

There is no denying, in any event, that MPRI's involvement came at the peak of a steady arms buildup in Croatia. Like a number of other defense analysts, Beaver says that since 1992, the Croatian army has violated the U.N. arms embargo by amassing an impressive arsenal of military hardware, including attack helicopters, battle tanks and long-range artillery. Most of these weapons are of Soviet make and were allegedly smuggled in from such countries as Hungary, Ukraine and Russia.

Croatian diplomats claim that Zagreb did not breach the embargo. Yet a former general in the Croatian army says that "Croatia had no other way to defend itself," apart from breaking the embargo. And the general, who prefers to remain anonymous, says Eastern European countries were "desperate to sell huge stocks of weapons" on the black market.

U.S. involvement in Croatia is more difficult to trace, but Washington clearly lent its tacit approval to Croatia's arms buildup and military adventures in 1995. Referring to the Croatian attack in western Bosnia, Croatian Foreign Minister Mate Granic has conceded that the Americans did not give the green light, yet "naturally they gave some very strong suggestions ... regarding the size of the operation." After the war's largest single act of "ethnic cleansing"—at least 150,000 Serbs fled the Krajina last August—the Clinton administration remained silent while the United Nations, Britain and France all condemned the Croatian offensive.

Beaver says that "there is circumstantial evidence to show [MPRI] has been involved in tactics" that Croatia used during the Krajina offensive. The newly reorganized Croats displayed a professionalism "light-years from what they did in the past," when they were routed by the Serbs in 1991. MPRI's Soyster says the company could not have played a significant role in the Krajina offensive; only 25 non-commissioned officers had then graduated from its rolls. Soyster does not dispute, however, that Gens. Vuono and Saint were in Zagreb shortly before the assault on Krajina, fulfilling what he calls a routine "policy to send in officers periodically to review the program."

The former Croatian army general offers only a vague appraisal of MPRI's role in Croatia: "The function of MPRI has many interpretations and also guesses." Yet as a commander on the front lines early in Croatia's war with the Krajina Serbs, he was in a position to observe low-level cooperation between the U.S. Department of Defense and the Croatian Ministry of Defense "since the moment Croatia became independent in 1991." According to the general, American Ambassador Peter Galbraith was "the main fac-

tor" in institutionalizing U.S.-Croatian military cooperation.

The general says the United States and Croatia cooperated on another level, namely "certain information which is available to the American military through satellites, air surveillance and unmanned aircraft."

The United States denies that it shared any intelligence with the Croats. The Clinton administration also denies reports that American planes flew weapons into Bosnia and that the United States has supported such countries as Saudi Arabia in smuggling arms to the Bosnian Muslims. Beaver says that arms dealers pay a 30 percent levy to Croatia for weapons going on to Bosnia. Clinton has long supported lifting the arms embargo on Bosnia, despite opposition from NATO allies. Now the Dayton agreement provides for the full, legal rearming of the Balkan belligerents.

Given the bitter course of the Balkan war since 1991, the Croats' decision to seek legal—and illegal—military aid is understandable. Before the Croatian army's victories last year, renegade Serbs occupied one-third of Croatia's territory.

Nevertheless, the often brutal record of Croatian nationalism should cause policy-makers to question whether independent Croatia's strategic goals are any less expansionist than Serbia's. Soyster says that MPRI looks carefully at its clients and "is not going to work for a 'rogue' government." He calls Croatia an "emerging democracy." But the country might be described more accurately as the alter ego of its archenemy, Serbia. Both states maintain democratic pretensions, yet are ruled by strongmen—Franjo Tudjman in Zagreb and Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade. Both men fanned the flames of rabid nationalism, targeted internal opposition and all but snuffed out independent media under their rule.

The dream of a Greater Serbia has been shattered, but Greater Croatia lives on. Croatia's offensives last year put more than a quarter of Bosnia-Herzegovina under its control. The Muslim-Croat Federation in Bosnia outlined in the Dayton agreement is unlikely to last, given increasing tensions between Bosnian Croats and Muslims.

Still, the Clinton administration has pledged \$100 million to build up the Bosnian army, and still hopes to raise another \$700 million from its allies. Not surprisingly, this is good news for MPRI. The company is currently competing with two other companies—BDM International of McLean, Va., and Science Applications International Corp. of San Diego—for the initial training contracts. And as the embargo on the former Yugoslavia is lifted, Soyster anticipates new deals in Croatia involving tactics and weapons training. The company is also mining other global markets—it has reportedly signed a contract to train the Angolan army after a U.S. policy reversal there.

U.S. foreign policy, often veiled from public scrutiny by the elastic rationales of executive privilege and national security, is now becoming even more difficult to track. It's no small irony that MPRI, which set out for the Balkans to bring the Croatian military under civilian control, is itself unfettered by public accountability or scrutiny. ◀

Lucian Kim is a freelance writer based in Berkeley, Calif.



# TURKEY

## Getting religion

*An Islamic  
political  
revival creates  
new unease for  
Turkey's  
secular  
state.*

**By Paul Hockenos**  
ANKARA, TURKEY

**I**n Turkey, it's nearly impossible to escape the steely glare of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938), the father of the modern Turkish republic. His grainy, black-and-white portrait adorns schools, shopping centers, post offices and bathhouses. Every Turkish village, no matter how small, has at least one street bearing the name of the man who forged a secular, national state from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire with an iron fist.

So revered is Turkey's national hero that his legacy—termed Kemalism—has long appeared unshakable. Yet Turkey's secular establishment was dealt a blow in general elections late last year, when the Islamist Refah (Welfare) Party took the largest share of the vote (21 percent). As the party's 69-year-old leader, Dr. Necmettin Erbakan, entered into coalition talks with the

center-right Motherland Party, many Turks feared the close of an era. But the two parties were unable to reach agreement on the division of ministerial appointments, and Motherland's leader, Mesut Yilmaz—under considerable pressure from the secular establishment—broke off talks with Refah in late February. In the end, Motherland agreed to form a minority coalition government with its rival on the center-right, the True Path Party, headed by outgoing Prime Minister Tansu Çiller. The alliance has kept the so-called “fundamentalists” in opposition, at least for now.

But Refah's spectacular upsurge is no fluke. It signals a deep crisis within the country's postwar political establishment and a raging battle over Turkey's identity. Seventy years after Atatürk abolished the Islamic caliphate, eliminated the Arabic script and stripped the clergy of its power, the pendulum is swinging back, though just how far is still hard to say.

In fiery stump speeches, Erbakan rails against the Western-oriented Kemalist tradition, invoking a nostalgia for the Ottoman era, when Turkey stood proud, and Islam ruled. At times, he promises to pull Turkey out of NATO and the EU customs union. (It was admitted into the customs union only this year, after lengthy and difficult negotiations with the European Union.) In their place, Turkey would head up an Islamic common market, linked by a single currency and a range of military and economic alliances. “Turkey,” bellows the grandfatherly, white-haired Erbakan, “will no longer suffer slavery at the hands of unbelievers.”

Erbakan is no newcomer to Turkish politics. In the 1970s, as head of the pro-Islamist National Salvation Party (the forerunner to Refah), the German-educated engineer participated in several coalition governments. During the military takeover of 1980-1983—Turkey's third since 1960—Erbakan was charged with attempting to establish an Islamic state and jailed for eight months. Eventually acquitted, Erbakan returned to politics following the resumption of civilian rule in 1983, and was closely involved in the formation of Refah. Under his leadership, the party has steadily widened its electoral base and developed an efficient and disciplined national organization, along with an extensive network of grass-roots groups providing charity and social services. In 1984 municipal elections, Refah only managed to secure 4 percent of the vote. But by the 1994 local elections, the party won dozens of mayoralships, including those in Ankara and Istanbul, and it now controls more than a third of Turkey's 76 local councils.

Despite its pro-Islamic orientation, Refah is more of a protest party than a fundamentalist religious movement. It

owes much of its dramatic success to widespread disillusion with the political status quo. Erbakan's tirades against government corruption and economic mismanagement draw protest votes from more than the poor and lower middle classes, although the core of Refah's support rests among the urban poor, whose ranks have swelled with the massive influx of migrants from the countryside. In big cities and in the more rural regions of central and eastern Turkey, Refah captured up to 40 percent of the vote. After years of high inflation and economic stagnation, Erbakan's calls for a "Just Economic Order," including the creation of an interest-free banking system, enjoy a broad appeal among impoverished constituencies.

On other issues, too, Refah's themes tap strong popular sentiments. Many Turks, for example, see the country's close ties to the West as sycophantic and degrading. Located at the crossroads between Europe and Asia, Turkey plays a critical strategic role as NATO's southern flank. The West has often taken advantage of this, most recently during the Gulf War. But many Turks feel the West has failed to pay Turkey its due respect or reward it with the fruits of modernization. The West keeps Turkey underdeveloped—and then looks down upon it for being underdeveloped.

Erbakan capitalizes on these resentments in his polemics against NATO, the IMF and the United States. What, he asks, does Turkey gain from doing the West's "dirty work"? He proposes that Turkey act as a bridge between East and West, as an independent regional power with a fully

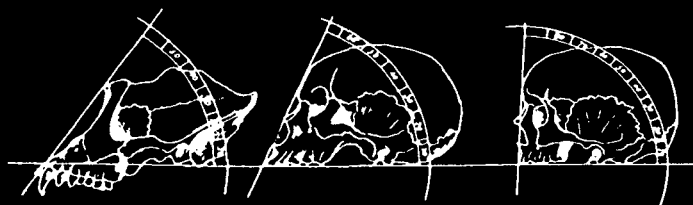
autonomous foreign policy. It is more than bluster when Erbakan calls for Turkey to "liberate" Azerbaijan, Bosnia, Chechnya and Jerusalem. Turks are sensitive about the West's hostility toward Islam and the perceived abandonment of Muslim causes around the world. Erbakan's call to prevent NATO from making the Islamic world its new bogeyman now that communism is dead strikes a responsive chord among many Turks—and corresponds with the judgments of many observers of Western policy as well.

Refah also draws much support for its pledge to revive Turkey's cultural heritage, of which Islam is an integral part. It argues that the hard-line Kemalists and the West have robbed Turks of what is uniquely Turkish, forcing upon them the "corrupt, secular, Western non-culture" of American films and pop music.

A renaissance of Turkish culture, even of Islamic practice, hardly poses a substantial threat to the Turkish state. Yet many of the demands of the traditionalist movement inevitably clash with Atatürk's legacy, particularly the strong emphasis placed on the containment of religious power. In Turkey, the state pays and supervises religious authorities. State law prohibits public employees, officials and even students from wearing religious dress on the job. A prominent issue at universities today is whether young women should be permitted to wear veils in the classroom, which until now has been banned. Young people in Turkey are showing a new interest in exploring their roots and attending mosque services, and they see these restrictions as limitations on their freedom. For them, the religious movement and its demands are progressive and democratic, the Kemalist traditions backward and archaic.

Neither Erbakan nor his party is capable of overturning Turkey's secular Kemalist traditions. Even had Refah come to power, Turkey's military, as staunch guardians of the secular establishment, would have surely kept it in line. The vast majority of Turks feel uncomfortable with Erbakan's radical outbursts and inflammatory gestures. But his themes echo beyond the party ranks and challenge assumptions that the Kemalists have been unwilling to question.

In opposition, where populism is most potent, the Islamists will have an open field. The new center-right coalition will be hard-pressed to come up with new solutions to the grave problems that their parties have created over the past decades. From the walls of Turkey's institutions, Atatürk's unchanging countenance belies the turmoil at the very heart of his republic. ◀



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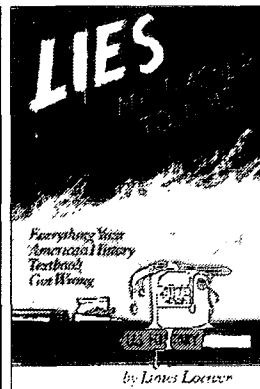
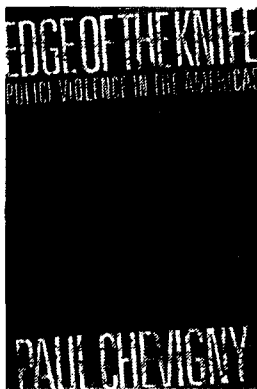
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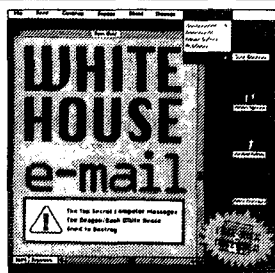
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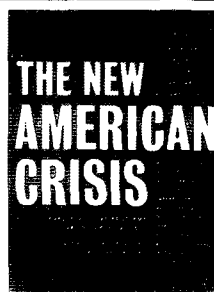
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**BLACK AMERICA**

# The slavery showdown

*The question of African slavery divides opinion in America's black community.*

By Salim Muwakkil

**N**

early 200 people packed the community room in a black middle-class enclave on Chicago's South Side last month while a New York-based journalist named Samuel Cotton told terrible tales about contemporary slavery in the African nations of the Sudan and Mauritania, having just returned from a 28-day fact-finding tour of Mauritania.

The spirited and curious crowd soon broke out in loud debate about the role religion played in the issue. Both the Sudan and Mauritania are ruled by Islamic governments, and many Chicago blacks have Muslim connections.

Similar disputes have broken out among many in the black American political community. Although charges of black slavery in parts of Africa have been circulating for many years, Cotton's hard-hitting three-part series in the black-owned, Brooklyn-based *City Sun* convinced many African-Americans

that the charges deserved closer and more urgent scrutiny.

Under banner headlines such as "Arab Masters, Black Slaves," Cotton exposed the lingering Islamic tradition of slavery in Mauritania and the slavery that resulted from years of civil war in the Sudan. Both countries are "Islamic Republics" and are dominated by Arabs. In Mauritania, the Arabs are racially distinct from indigenous blacks; in the Sudan, however, the difference is mostly cultural or "ethnic." In Mauritania, Cotton wrote, "black Africans continue to be enslaved by their Arab-Berber masters. ... Slaves are given as wedding gifts, traded for camels, guns or trucks and inherited." In the Sudan, he reported, "black women and children (mostly Christian) are being captured in raids on their villages and sold as chattel slaves, sometimes, according to the U.N., in 'modern-day slave markets.'" Cotton's series ran two months

after Mohamed Nacir Athie and Charles Jacobs of the American Anti-Slavery Group (AASG) published an op-ed piece in the *New York Times* on the existence of a modern-day slave trade.

Indeed, Cotton's print crusade was just one of many that sought to provide evidence of slavery's persistence. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Human Rights Watch and the U.S. State Department all have published reports confirming charges that slavery is still practiced in Mauritania and the Sudan. Congressional hearings last March featured several witnesses, including Cotton, who offered horrifying testimony about contemporary chattel slavery.

Despite this accumulation of evidence, however, few black leaders have offered anything but the most tepid support for the anti-slavery struggle. "There's been a peculiar silence from those who would be the most natural forces to fight on behalf of black slaves—the same coalition that fought apartheid," Cotton told the Chicago gathering. Instead, he noted, white politicians—particularly right-wing Republicans—have shown the most concern for the plight of enslaved black Africans. Of course, their expressions of concern may mask the ulterior motive of discrediting black nationalist rhetoric, but blacks and progressives have been silent on what should be their issue, he said.

"I think the black mainstream is reluctant to get involved because they're getting Arab money," suggests Nate Clay, a black publisher and talk-show host who heads the Chicago chapter of the International Coalition Against Chattel Slavery. "And I think some black nationalists are reluctant because of Islam's strong relationship to nationalist history and the current influence of Minister Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam (NOI)." And Clay says mainstream groups like the NAACP, the National Urban League and Operation Push are keeping his group at arm's length until they get a



better feel for the politics of the matter.

In fact, the issue has provoked a split between some NOI members and African-American critics of the Mauritanian and the Sudanese regimes. Several NOI officials have dismissed the slavery charges as disinformation spread by the Anti-Defamation League of the B'nai B'rith, which, they claim, seeks to use the controversy to drive a religious wedge between increasingly popular NOI leader Minister Louis Farrakhan and the black community.

A. Akbar Muhammad, a high-ranking Farrakhan aide, accuses the AASG of using "big lie" propaganda. "It's another manipulative device intended to divide the black and Arab people in America and on the African continent," he says. "Dr. Charles Jacobs, a Jewish consultant, has been using the pain of a black Mauritanian to justify his attack on Islam." Athie, the AASG's executive director, is a black Mauritanian Muslim who has written that his country's Arab rulers see color, not religion, in their tradition of black slavery. Muhammad dismisses Athie as a pawn of Jacobs.

Despite such extremist rhetoric, it is in fact possible that protests of the various anti-slavery groups may play into the hands of forces with ulterior motives. And it is that possibility—along with a serious lack of information about the problem—that prevents black leadership from more enthusiastically embracing this worthy cause.

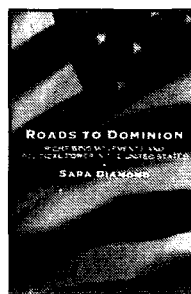
Still, it's hard to figure why Farrakhan's NOI has not been more forthright in condemning the open record of slavery in Mauritania. His group has often gone on record as opposing the "Arabization" of Islam, and most reports from that beleaguered West African country cite the Arabs' cultural domination over its indigenous black population as a major human rights abuse. The NOI's defense of the Sudan is a bit more understandable. Some observers cite Akbar Muhammad's commercial interests as a motivating factor (he heads a travel agency that specializes in trips to Ghana and the Sudan).

Nate Clay explains the NOI leaders' recriminations as denial: They simply don't want to admit Islam's complicity in modern slavery. This conundrum, Clay admits, has caused him to re-evaluate Islam's relationship to Africans at home and in the diaspora.

But others argue the evidence of slavery in the Sudan is slim at best, and that Western nations are simply using the charge to discredit a hated regime and prepare the way for damaging economic sanctions. In Mauritania, the evidence of slavery is too overwhelming to dismiss, but critics of the various anti-slavery groups contend that the issue is less a matter of Islamic imperialism than economic injustice.

The arguments are certain to heat up as the "new abolitionists" (as they're called) more effectively publicize their case. Unfortunately, as the opposing sides become more vitriolic in their attacks, internecine conflict seems more likely to escalate. And that may make the suspicions of an external divide-and-conquer strategy a self-fulfilling prophecy. ◀

## ISSUES OF THE TIMES



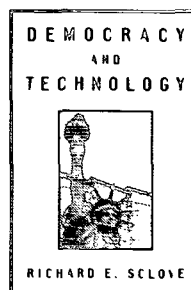
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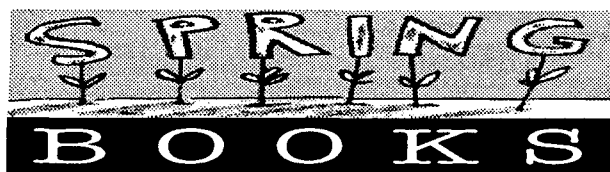
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# Democracy, republican-style

By Robert Westbrook

**M**any contemporary American politicians—especially liberal ones—have become quite disoriented by the new prominence of moral discourse in American public life. Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala recently gave characteristic expression to this confusion when she spoke about the nation's rising level of illegitimate childbirth. "I don't like to put this in moral terms," Shalala said, "but I do believe that having children out of wedlock is wrong."

In *Democracy's Discontent*, political theorist Michael Sandel sets out to explain how the minimal moral philosophies captured in such remarks reflect a larger crisis in liberal political theory. At the same time, Sandel seeks to revive the faded public philosophy of civic republicanism, which he argues is much better suited than liberalism to addressing the widespread sense among Americans that they are losing the ability to control their own lives and that the moral underpinnings of their communities are eroding.

These anxieties have left Democrats and Republicans alike groping for a broadly appealing language of virtue, and neither has yet to find it. Meanwhile, these fears are grist for the mill of authoritarian "populists" such as Pat Buchanan, who offer up a politics of exclusion and coercive moralism promising a sizable constituency the opportunity to "take back their country." Both parties, Sandel suggests, might well start talking and thinking in a republican dialect grown rusty with disuse.

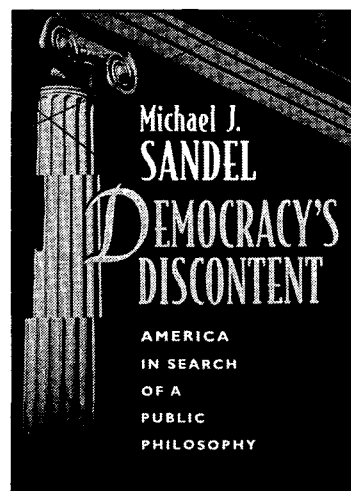
Sandel targets a version of liberal political theory that envisions the American polity as a "procedural republic." This theory enjoys the broad assent of both latter-day "liberals" and "conservatives" (moral majoritarians excepted). At its heart is a conception of freedom as the capacity of individuals to choose their own values and ends as long as they do not impinge on the capacity of others to do the same. Thoroughly voluntaristic in character, this theory posits an ideal of "unencumbered" selves whose values and commitments are entirely the consequence of uncoerced choice. In this philosophy, the state is committed to no particular ends

or values beyond those of justice, remaining neutral toward the various conceptions of the good life held by its citizens.

By contrast, republicans such as Sandel hold that freedom is inextricably bound up with self-government and, consequently, with a particular conception of the good life. By Sandel's account, republicans understand self-rule as "deliberating with fellow citizens about the common good and helping to shape the destiny of the political community." Participating in self-government thus requires more than the capacity to choose one's own ends; it requires the capacity to "deliberate well about the common good" and hence the possession of "certain excellences—of character, judgment and concern for the whole." Citizens must have "a knowledge of public affairs and also a sense of belonging, a concern for the whole, a moral bond with the community whose fate is at stake." For this reason, republicans must commit themselves to a "formative politics," that is, "a politics that cultivates in citizens the qualities of character self-government requires." Republican government seeks to instill a particular conception of the good life—a life of active self-government—in its citizens. This is not to say that republicans define the good life exclusively as self-rule, but it does mean that for them "liberty requires citizens whose identity is defined in part by civic responsibilities." In sum, republican politics "regards moral character as a public, not merely private, concern."

Sandel builds his argument around two stories: one designed to demonstrate that, over the course of the last 50 or so years, liberalism of the sort that troubles him has become "the political philosophy by which we live," and another designed to demonstrate that prior to World War II this liberalism had republican competition. Both these stories are well told and instructive, though both are tales of declension, which will likely leave readers wondering why Sandel clings to the hope for a republican revival.

Sandel's first story takes the form of a concise and compelling survey of American constitutional law, focusing on the last generation of Supreme Court adjudication of cases involving religious liberty, freedom of speech, privacy rights and family law. It is an approach that too readily identifies law with political philosophy, but Sandel uses it to illuminate an important point: In



**Democracy's Discontent:**  
America in Search  
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Harvard University Press  
417 pp., \$24.95

the last generation the three pillars of procedural liberalism—the priority of rights, ethical neutrality and the unencumbered self—have become thoroughly entrenched in the Court's thinking, to an extent they had never been before. To offer but one example, the right to privacy, which until quite recently meant the right to keep one's private life from public view, has been transformed into a right to engage in a range of activities without government restraint, and in some cases rendered near-synonymous with individual autonomy. With admirable clarity, Sandel traces this progression through the series of court decisions regulating sexual behavior, culminating in the 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* decision. In *Roe*, the Court advanced arguments of a thoroughly liberal sort, asserting that individual rights trumped state action; claiming to be neutral—unlike the Texas law it overturned—on the moral status of the fetus; and describing the privacy interest in the case as that of the unfettered autonomy of women.

Sandel sharply and effectively contests the claim of liberal jurisprudence to moral neutrality. Like Donna Shalala, the Court has been unable despite itself to avoid moral terms. In *Roe*, for example, the Court charged that the Texas law failed to be neutral because it rested on a particular theory of life, but then based its own decision on the non-neutral, moral presumption (contested by those opposed to abortion) that the state had no legitimate interest in potential life until the point at which the fetus "has the capability of meaningful life outside the mother's womb."

More generally, Sandel demonstrates again and again that the Court's protection of the rights of an unencumbered self has amounted to a non-neutral sanctioning of a particular conception of the good life. Under this view, moral commitments are presumed to be freely chosen (and freely disposable), and those who see themselves as encumbered selves constituted by their obligations and loyalties are penalized. Perhaps the most striking example here is the case of *Thornton vs. Caldor, Inc.* (1985), in which the Court struck down a Connecticut law that gave sabbath observers alone the right to choose which day of the week they could take as their mandated day off, on the grounds that it granted them a choice that should be made available (or not) to all employees. Here the Court presumed that the law was unfairly providing sabbatarians with a *choice* not provided to others when it was instead trying to protect their right to practice a *duty* required of them by their religion. As sabbatarians saw it, they had no choice in the matter; they were encumbered by God.

Such gaps in moral comprehension issue from more than the Court's failure to remain neutral (as liberal doctrine prescribes) in moral disputes. Rather, Sandel argues, they reflect the Court's efforts to embed a faulty moral ideal—the unencumbered self—into the law of the land. Sandel claims this image of the self

cannot make sense of our moral experience, because it cannot account for certain moral and political obligations that we commonly recognize, even prize. These include obliga-

tions of solidarity, religious duties and other moral ties that may claim us for reasons unrelated to a choice. Such obligations are difficult to account for if we understand ourselves as free and independent selves, unbound by moral ties we have not chosen. Unless we think of ourselves as unencumbered selves, already claimed by certain projects and commitments, we cannot make sense of these indispensable aspects of our moral and political experience.

Many Americans, including some lawmakers, have been at odds with the procedural liberalism of the Court, and decisions such as *Roe* have been, to say the least, controversial. Many Americans do not see themselves as unencumbered selves, nor is the Court's liberalism the political philosophy by which they wish to live, though little of this opposition can be said to be republican in its thinking. It is not only fundamentalists, as Sandel says, but those generally encumbered with religious beliefs that have been most likely to "rush in where liberals fear to tread."

At the same time, many Americans *do* wish to live as unencumbered selves, and Sandel's historical case for the ascendancy of procedural liberalism would have been stronger (and his philosophical objections to it weaker) had he more often looked beyond the Court and explored the manner in which that ideal has become deeply rooted in some quarters of American culture. Indeed, in this respect the Court may have reflected as well as shaped moral ideals abroad in the wider culture.

Sandel himself briefly points to a wider constituency for the procedural republic in his discussion of family law, in which he notes not only that the Court has come to construe the American family as a contractual arrangement among unencumbered selves, but also that many American families have actually taken this form. Surveys show a growing tendency of Americans to detach themselves from the encumbrances of familial roles, and to regard familial responsibilities simply as restrictions on their freedom. Sandel allows that "the unencumbered self not only governs public life but penetrates the precincts of family life as well." But if this is the case, then it would appear that we *can* use liberal theory to make sense of the moral experience of a substantial number of Americans who have been doing their damndest to become unencumbered selves by repudiating "moral ties that may claim us for reasons unrelated to a choice"—a view echoed in the contention of critics such as the late Christopher Lasch that we are witnessing a "revolt of the elites," who have managed to buy their way out of any common life with their fellow citizens. If American elites increasingly fail to recognize, let alone prize, the encumbrances of moral and political obligation essential to the pursuit of a common good, this can only be bad news for republicans.

Sandel makes much of the belatedness of liberal hegemony, and the second story he tells is that of a long struggle between republicans and liberals over the shape and legiti-



mation of the American political economy—a struggle that Sandel says stretched from the late 18th century to the latter days of the New Deal. Building on the enormous literature on republican ideology historians have churned out over the last 30 years, he shows that until quite recently one can find voices, albeit increasingly weak voices, arguing less over the familiar issues of economic growth and distributive justice than over the civic consequences of economic policy. Or, to put it somewhat more bluntly than Sandel does, for some time one can find Americans worrying over the consequences of the dynamics of capitalism for republican citizenship. These worries, rooted in a concern about the fate of a simple market economy of independent, petty producers upon which the health of a republican polity was thought to depend, eventually gave rise to a powerful, non-Marxist denunciation of permanent wage labor, which fueled labor politics for much of the 19th century. Recognizably republican themes also animated Populist politics (which Sandel inexplicably neglects) and echoed in the social criticism of early 20th-century intellectuals such as Jane Addams, Louis Brandeis, Herbert Croly and John Dewey.

Many historians would no doubt dispute Sandel's claims for the relative strength of republican ideology after the Revolution. Gordon Wood, who has done as much as anyone to put republicanism on the historical agenda, has persistently argued for the triumph of liberalism in the late 18th century. His recent *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (a Newt Gingrich favorite) argues, in effect, that the Revolution, though launched by civic republicans, ended up as a triumph for the liberal proponents of the unencumbered self. But whatever position one takes in such debates, no one, Sandel included, disputes the eventual dissipation of republican arguments in debates over the course of the American political economy.

Had Sandel attended not only to ideology but institutions, his historical account of republican defeat would become even more precipitous and discouraging. He quotes—as do all democratic republicans—from Thomas Jefferson's famous 1816 letter to Samuel Kercheval in which he proposed a ward system that would provide every citizen with the opportunity to participate in a local, face-to-face politics that would "ascribe to them the government of their wards in all things relating to themselves exclusively" and bind them to a wider, representative republican politics. But he does not quote from the letter Jefferson wrote a few weeks earlier to John Taylor, in which he lamented that "our governments have much less of republicanism than ought to have been expected" and expressed the fear that "the golden moment is past" for changing the situation. "The functionaries of public power," he noted, "rarely strengthen in their dispositions to abridge it." Appealing as Jefferson's plan for a more participatory politics remains, one must admit that his fears were well placed.

Much of Sandel's hope for a republican revival rests simply on the claim that it would meet a widespread anxiety over the "loss of self-government." But he never

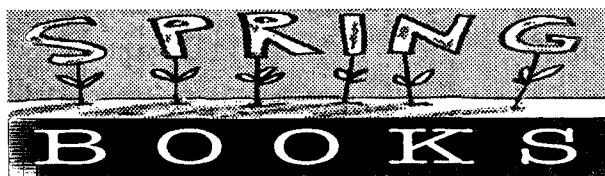
makes the case that such an anxiety exists, and one wonders how Americans could be anxious about losing something they never had—and that, by Sandel's own account, is not something that they have been led to expect or desire for decades.

This is not to say that neo-republicanism does not offer, in the abstract, an attractive response to the anxieties many Americans feel about their lives and communities. It promises to return control to democratic publics, guided by essentially "procedural" ideals of their own: those of practical reason and deliberative democracy. Hence, neo-republicans would put moral issues on the political agenda without imposing any particular moral creed. But neo-republicans will face extraordinarily difficult ideological and practical obstacles if they are to overcome both liberal proceduralism and the absolutist moralisms that are rushing in to fill the ethical void it has created. Americans must be convinced that the good life should include the burdens (and pleasures) of active self-government, and they must be persuaded to launch the daunting, radical politics required to give it institutional embodiment. If democracy was not dangerous, we would have more of it.

But should we find ourselves with a neo-republican politics, I suspect it would be unlike any we now have, and would cut across contemporary divides of left and right. It would be a politics that targeted both corporate power and welfare dependency. It would be a politics that would open American borders to immigrants from all lands, yet insist that they learn English in order to command a *lingua franca* of citizenship. It would be a politics critical of moral absolutism, yet open to moral arguments.

As he concluded *The Public and Its Problems* (1927)—a book that bears more than a passing resemblance to *Democracy's Discontent*—John Dewey remarked that readers might think his own account of the conditions promoting "the emergence of the Public from its eclipse" amounted to something "close to denial of the possibility of realizing the idea of a democratic public." Many readers will no doubt feel the same way about Sandel's book. Like Dewey, he knows how to ask many of the right questions: "What economic arrangements are hospitable to self-government? How might our political discourse engage rather than avoid the moral and religious convictions people bring to the public realm? And how might the public life of a pluralist society cultivate in citizens the expansive self-understandings that civic engagement requires?" But like Dewey, he is short on clear answers. Unless he and others of like mind answer these questions, and devise a politics appropriate to the answers, Sandel will be fated to join other democratic republicans before him in a band of morally perceptive and rhetorically eloquent losers. ◀

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## See spots run

By Jackson Lears

To understand what to make of James Twitchell's celebratory study *Adcult USA*, it's worthwhile to revisit the recent history of America's often ambivalent efforts to make cultural sense of the business of advertising. As recently as three decades ago, advertising was an easy target—a lumbering behemoth, vulnerable to the accusations of pop sociologist Vance Packard and the parodies of *Mad* magazine. Ad men, it was thought, devoted their waking hours to devising inane jingles and systematically deceiving the chuckleheaded consumer. According to the conventional lore, they were bullied by bosses and cowed by clients. No wonder the men in the grey flannel suits were given to self-hate, sick jokes and bleeding ulcers. At the moment when advertising reached its apparent apogee—when consumer culture finally acquired the stable institutional base of a well-paid working population—the hucksters themselves were being vilified as manipulators of the multitude. It was the 1950s. Brainwashing was on everyone's mind. Corporate commissars, critics feared, could scrub brains as thoroughly as Chinese Communists—though the results would be trivial rather than menacing.

But things began to change, perhaps as early as 1959. That was the year William Bernbach began crafting low-key ads for Volkswagen, which implicitly satirized the lumbering celebration of bigness in most automobile ads. What advertising historians reverently refer to as “the Creative Revolution” was under way. The repetitive, clanking refrains of '50s advertising became less insistent. The relentless (and easily parodied) logic of Rosser Reeves' Unique Selling Proposition (“absorbs 12 times its weight in excess stomach acid”) began to be tempered by urbanity, understatement, even a dash of irony. Ad men (and increasingly, ad women) were about to trade in their grey flannels for jeans and a work shirt. Advertising was about to become hip.

To be sure, old suspicions died hard. Much of the '60s counterculture was rooted in rejection of suburban consumption patterns and the scrubbed symbolic universe cre-

ated by advertising. But as the counterculture succumbed to the search for “alternative life styles,” and advertising became ever so haltingly hipper, a new appreciation for corporate-sponsored culture began to appear among the very people who had once held that culture in contempt—left-leaning humanists at major universities.

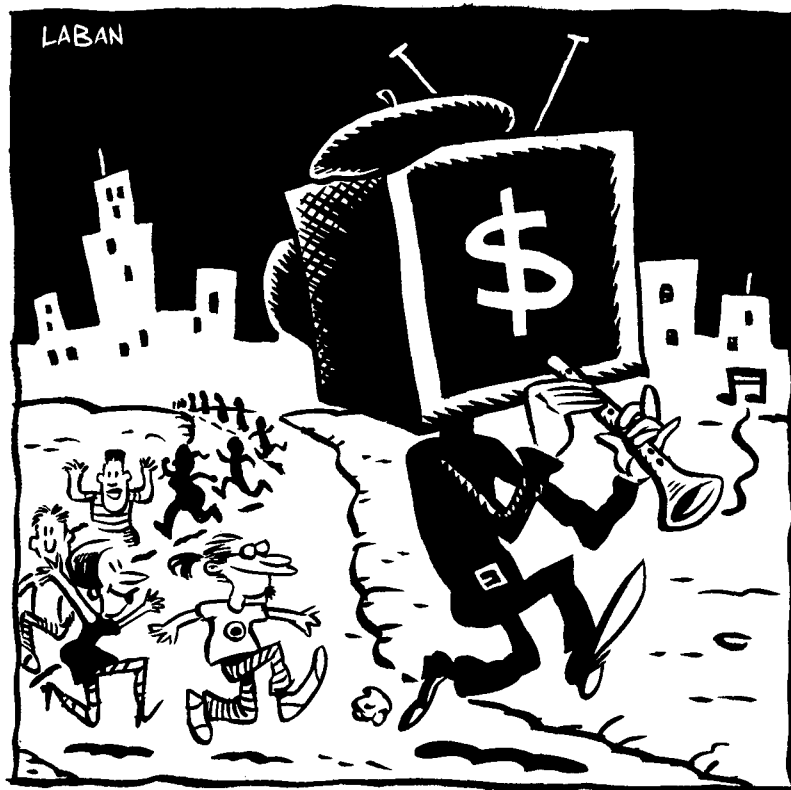
The reasons for this shift in sensibility were complex. The newer advertising was more entertaining and easier to like than its humorless predecessor from the '50s; as the comparative stability of postwar consumer culture gave way to deindustrialization and downsizing, advertising became less standardized, livelier, less predictable. Ironists with hand-held cameras invaded America's telescreens. The perspectives of academic leftists themselves were changing as well. By the mid-1980s many were feeling tenured but powerless. Confined to the margins of public discourse in an era of stupefying complacency, they turned to canon-smashing. One of the central campaigns of this farcical war was an attack on the distinction between high and low art forms. In part this was a justifiable attempt to empower ordinary people in the realm of taste, by granting some dignity to their diversions; in part it was a know-nothing assault on the “elitist” effort to make aesthetic discriminations of any kind.

By a strange logic, corporate-sponsored entertainment, including advertising, became redefined as part of popular culture—merely because a lot of people watched it on television. Postmodern intellectual fashion assisted this transformation. Critics were weary of the ponderous modernist quest for depths of meaning, and ready to cavort amid the agreeably shiny surfaces manufactured by the mass media. The critique of advertising as manipulation was revived by commentators like Stuart Ewen, but it received far less credence in the '80s than it had in the '60s. It was tarred with the all-purpose brush of “elitism,” and dismissed as an outmoded vision of social control.

According to the emerging conventional wisdom, which united neoconservative social scientists like Mary Douglas with leftist historians like Warren Susman, the older critique of advertising failed to acknowledge consumers' capacity to make their own meanings with commodities—particularly if those consumers were women. Advertising, from this view, acquired a feminist edge; it led women out of the dark Victorian parlor into the dazzling atmosphere of the department store; it created a new commercial public



*Adcult USA: The Triumph of Advertising in American Culture*  
By James B. Twitchell  
Columbia University Press  
296 pp., \$24.95



sphere in which women and men could meet as (almost) equals. But perhaps the most potent force for the new approbation of advertising was the common currency of hipness; advertising, the postmodern left discovered, was clever and fun; it was even “subversive”—if one believed Victorian values were alive, well and in need of subversion. For years, advertising apologists like David Ogilvie had stigmatized their critics as puritanical kill-joys and humorless old maids; now even leftists were willing to agree.

The postmodern turn in cultural criticism was not a witless capitulation to capital. The older critique, especially in its cruder forms, really was hobbled by puritanical and masculine biases; often it depended on a mechanical model of social control. The more thoughtful postmodern critics—Andrew Ross, Leslie Savan—began a long-overdue exploration of the fantasies and longings that attracted people to the market in the first place, that made them susceptible to advertising but also critical of its failure to live up to its utopian promise. The problem with the simpler versions of postmodernism, though, was that they dissolved any tensions between advertisers and their audience in the soothing broth of popular culture. They ignored inequalities of power. They forgot the obvious abyss between the institutions that could produce mass-marketed images and the audience that could hardly avoid watching them, let alone produce alternatives.

The trick for critics since the postmodern turn has been to acknowledge the institutional power and cultural constraints embodied in advertising while at the same time admitting the

variety and vitality of commercial speech—in particular its capacity for ventriloquism (which Stuart Hall observed some years ago)—for appropriating and recycling vernacular forms, often from the margins of respectable-class life. Whatever seems novel and spontaneous is up for grabs: break-dancing, surfing, hip-hop, slam dunks, “uh-huh.” Since African-American culture is one of the most prominent areas of resistance to the bland managerialism of the corporate marketplace, signifiers of spontaneity often come from that source. The search for vernacular vitality is necessary to prevent advertising from returning to the sclerotic condition of the 1950s—and to keep us all from perishing of boredom.

James Twitchell is not bored. Twitchell, a professor of English at the University of Florida, loves advertising. He careens into the post-modern turn, and never really pulls out of it. *Adcult USA* is a brisk and sometimes informative tour of advertising’s pervasive presence in contemporary American society, but as an effort to assess advertising’s larger cultural significance, the book remains unsatisfying. It is a bold assault on positions that have been abandoned by serious critics for more than a decade.

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What really gets Twitchell’s juices flowing is the attempt to separate high culture from popular culture: This is nothing more than snobbery, he believes: “What is in high culture is what a particular class of self-styled elite gatekeepers say is in high culture.” He announces this as if it were a daring manifesto; indeed, he believes that any attempt to link “low culture advertising and high culture art” is nothing less than “academic sacrilege.” Intent on sustaining this heretical posture, Twitchell does not seem to realize that in most humanities departments, the linkage of high and low has become almost obligatory—a demonstration of one’s solidarity with the consuming masses, against the anemic gentility of the academic elite. No one would deny the anemia, but how vital an alternative is advertising?

Indispensably vital, according to Twitchell. Advertising is nothing less than “the folklore of commodity culture”—“it is who we are. It is us.” (“We” is one of Twitchell’s favorite words.) Television “is our favorite way to pass the time,” he writes, citing the usual six-hours-a-day statistic. “We speak in brand names now because we now think in them,” he asserts. “The Europeans may be able to watch sports with the audio off, but we don’t. We need to be told what we see.” Assumptions of cultural homogeneity pervade the book: Twitchell makes Theodor Adorno look like a pluralist.

Unlike Adorno, Twitchell wants to abolish the boundary between advertising and its audience, to show that “the people are the boss” of the mass media—in the words of Roger King, head of syndication for *Jeopardy* and a key witness for the defense of advertising. In making his case,



Twitchell creates a straw man that nearly overcomes him: a manipulative model of advertising as social control, whether articulated in the “paranoid” idiom of Vance Packard, the prim feminism of the MacKinnon/Dworkin variety (which Twitchell assails in his discussion of Naomi Wolf’s *The Beauty Myth*) or the “Marxist balderdash of cloistered academics.” What all these critics have in common is a belief that advertising causes people to do things that might not be in their best interests.

Nonsense, Twitchell says. “The real work of Madison Avenue is not to manipulate the doltish public but to find out how people already live,” he writes, “not to make myth but to make your product part of an existing code.” This statement would be more defensible if (despite the vogue of niche marketing) advertisers’ ideas about “how people already live” were not so standardized by class and cultural assumptions and if their notions of the “already existing code” were not so flat, so inane, so indifferent to the existence of alternative codes.

This is the big problem with Twitchell’s insistent comparison between advertising and religion—the codes may be structurally similar, but only up to a point, and the underlying purposes are profoundly different. Twitchell ignores any differences. “If you wish to see the similarities between religious and advertising pitches, turn on your television set. The television commercial is an almost perfect mimic of a religious parable.” (Both tell us how to be saved.) Both the advertising industry and the Roman Catholic Church, he writes, “are Richter scales forever measuring our most intimate concerns.” All this may be true, but think a minute. The central purpose of most religions is to help human beings come to grips with the fundamental conflicts in their lives: above all, the conflict between the longing for life and the certain fact of death. Adcult, of course, does nothing to address this conflict; indeed, the very notion of insoluble conflict (especially this one) is inadmissible to its symbolic universe.

Twitchell inadvertently reveals this when he contrasts Pop Art with Abstract Expressionism. He prefers the frank commercialism of Pop. “Let the Gloomy Gusses of Abstract Expressionism like Franz Kline, Barnett Newman, and David Smith mull things over down at Rothko’s chapel; these commercial artists were heading for the street.” To be sure, the Spiritual Quest of the Artist can grow wearisome; someone had to call a halt at some point. But the gloominess of the Abstract Expressionists may have been more than a pose, may have stemmed, in fact, from their effort to confront ultimate questions in their work—questions the world of advertising evaded and denied. Adcult is not going to replace religion any time soon.

There are times when it looks like Twitchell himself might suspect this. *Adcult USA* contains evidence that undermines the equation between advertising imagery and the audience’s values. Twitchell acknowledges that advertisers only know their audience through market research,

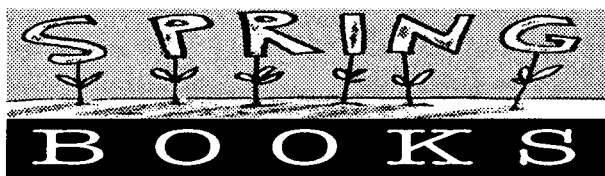
all the tools of which are “based on the principle that birds of a feather flock together”—or on questionnaires that ask respondents whether they like Michael Jackson a lot, somewhat, or not at all. This is the mentality of the pollster as well as the market researcher; it filters all information through pop sociological categories and statistical formulations. It constructs audience responses rather than merely discovering them. To be sure, there is some discovery going on; advertisers do try to play to existing values and prejudices. In fact, their attitude, like that of the media-driven politician, might be described as timid majoritarianism: how to shape the presentation to offend as few people as possible.

The marketing orientation assures a certain blandness in adcult and the surrounding mass media, for all their alleged vitality. Twitchell acknowledges this at points throughout the book. Newspapers “tend to self-censor to provide a bland and unobtrusive plasma” that can safely carry advertising to its audience; magazines, under the same influences, became “as bland as vanilla.” Commercial radio was responsible for “dumbing down American culture” with “mindless humor, maudlin sentimentality, exaggerated action, and frivolous entertainment.” Corporations’ sponsorship of museum exhibits weeds out controversy, seeking out blockbusters that will be “corporate compatible.” The mechanical predictability of TV sitcoms is “partially the result of the demands of advertisers.” This last is a particularly damaging admission, given Twitchell’s insistence that mass media directly reflect (as well as reinforce) the values of the audience.

On the contrary: Twitchell’s many examples from the world of contemporary advertising remind us of what we already know—far from reflecting the values and aspirations of a diverse population, much of contemporary corporate advertising is imbued with “a hipness unto death,” as Mark Crispin Miller observes. The cutting edge of corporate style remains the knowing use of irony by the young, upscale, in-your-face inhabitants of adcult.

Fortunately, the audience is far more interesting than advertising executives can imagine. To propose alternatives to adcult, we might start by asserting the importance of that vast, unexplored terrain between advertisers and their audience. We might consider the world of local knowledge and vernacular tradition, of people who may well have a deft sense of irony, but who never confuse an in-your-face attitude with an expression of popular democracy or personal freedom. (Think, for example, of Michael Moore’s often subtle, arched-eyebrow delivery in *Roger and Me*.) We might insist on the centrality in human life of precisely those idiosyncratic experiences that are not reducible to the categories of market research. Then we might have something worth writing about.

Jackson Lears is a professor of history at Rutgers University and the author of *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (BasicBooks). He is currently working on a history of luck in American life.



# Not everyone's a critic

By Bonnie Smith

**W**oman critic? Scan the contents of the most visible weeklies of high culture and you will suppose the term an oxymoron. How many women and men have dropped their subscriptions to *The New York Review of Books* or *The New Yorker* because most issues have a full complement of (the same old) male authors and, conspicuously, only one woman? The reason isn't so much political as practical: Few want to pay for boredom. *The New Yorker*, until the recent "women's issue" (which had far more male critics than any of the usual "male" issues has female critics), often uses the allotted female quota for poetry or fiction, thus further diminishing our ability to imagine the woman critic. Perhaps there really is no such animal.

Let the Folger Collective on Early Women Critics refresh our memories of the delightful, insightful, engaging, path-breaking possibilities in women's criticism. A group of scholars who meet regularly at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., the collective brings together a century and a half (1660-1820) of this writing in a rich sampling that covers a variety of critical genres and issues. The rise of modern science, changes in aesthetic standards and matters of political reform were all grist for these critics' mills.

Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle (1623-1673), for example, turns a critic's eye on the forgotten but once important art of reading aloud to one's family or acquaintances. The early modern writer, unlike the modern one, depended on the "good Voice and ... graceful Delivery" of her reader, the duchess notes. She warns this would-be reader of the potential damage threatening the work itself, like the performer who "can play but one Tune on all sorts of Instruments; so some will read with one Tone or Sound of Voice." Reading in a monotone or too quickly, whiningly, passionately or squealingly threatened a work as much as a bad fiddler threatened a musical score.

Cavendish, like many writers, reflected on her own graphomania: "It is probably, some will say, that much writing is a disease; ... yet of this I am sure, that if much writing be a disease, then the best philosophers, both Moral and Natural, as also the best Divines, Lawyers, Physitians, Poets, Historians, Orators, Mathematicians, Chymists, and many more have been grievously sick, and Seneca, Linius, Aristotle, Cicero, Tacitus, Plutarch, Euclid, Homer, Virgil, Ovid, St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, Scotius, Hippocrates, Galen, Paracelsus, and hundreds more have been at death's door with the disease of writing."

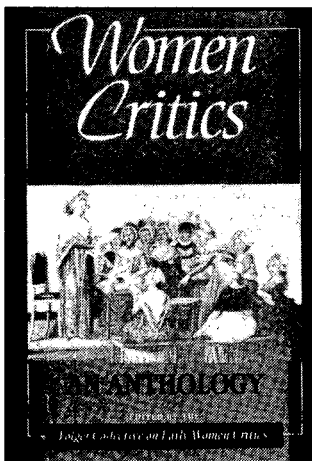
The woman critic brimmed with learning, eloquence, taste and an ability to weave all these into a crisp account. Elizabeth Inchbald (1753-1821) learned enough from her failed career as an actress to become rich from her theater criticism. Like a playwright herself, she interwove plot and subplot, lacing together the basics of Voltaire's "Mahomet" with a brief on the play's tumultuous reception in Dublin and a political tribute to its English adaptor, the Rev. James Miller. In contrast, Phyllis Wheatley (1753?-1784), the erudite New England slave, presented her thoughts on imagination, memory and African-American painting in eloquent verse.

Meanwhile, others mimed seduction, like Aphra Behn, who addressed her "Good, Sweet, Honey, Sugar-candied READER. Which I think is more than any one has call'd you yet." Germaine de Staël, the wealthiest woman in Europe in her day, commanded serious attention even when she touted the importance of fictional writing for distraction, pleasure and stimulation of the passions.

Women also offered insightful comment on one another's writing. Dorothea Schlegel, analyzing de Staël's *Delphine* (1803), noted changes in the novelistic genre.

Whereas formerly, romances had highlighted a protagonist's heroic constancy in the swirl of great events and dangers, novels like *Delphine* barely had events but focused instead on inner reflection. Heroes' "difficulties arise from changes within themselves, and they have no other battle to fight than with their own desires, advantages, principles and renunciations...." Indeed, this anthology charts more than a century of the novel's development, along with changing standards of eloquence, literary form and political criticism.

Plump as this volume already is, it nonetheless omits dozens of major women critics



**Women Critics, 1660-1820**  
 Edited by the Folger  
 Collective on  
 Early Women Critics  
 Indiana University Press  
 410 pp., \$19.95

of the Enlightenment and revolutionary period; Mercy Otis Warren, Caroline Schlegel and Helen Maria Williams are just three of this distinguished company. Their writing provided important coverage of the French and American revolutions and such dramatic cultural movements as Romanticism.

Nevertheless, the book's gathering of voices makes for a richly representative selection. It also poses two basic questions for inquiring historical minds: Where did these women critics come from, and what happened to them? Both can be answered by tracing the rise of explicitly male notions of professionalism and political citizenship. Women critics were so numerous precisely because in this 150-year period the practices of modern cultural and philosophical criticism (as opposed to a more textually based philology) were just taking shape. The fledgling field had not yet been gendered. More women journalists and critics, such as Daniel Stern and Vernon Lee, took up the pen in the 19th century and became prominent. In their journalism, they too could be razor-sharp in their appreciations or dismissals of new books, wide-ranging in their literary and linguistic scope, and inclusive of the culture wars, social issues and political struggles of their day.

But notice the shift to a male pseudonym in these two very powerful writers. Indeed, François Buloz, editor of the career-making-and-breaking *Revue des deux mondes*, forced some of his women critics to suppress or change feminine names if they wanted to be published; the male pseudonym became common for dozens of women critics. However, similar gender blurring seemed to operate in the 19th- and early 20th-century male critic. Although Carlyle touted the literary "man" of genius, a premier French critic, St.-Beuve, wrote copious appreciations of 18th-century women critics and erudites in his weekly columns. Eugène Lerminier and, later, Oscar Wilde and Lytton Strachey struck more or less effeminate poses, allowing them a critical positioning in both sexes, much like that of the pseudonymous female author.

Yet by the beginning of World War I, women writers had come to be called "amateurs," not critics, and as print culture evolved to mass culture, the position of the woman critic deteriorated to the low point where it rests today. Criticism had moved to a height inaccessible to women as it acquired a power appropriate only to men. This gendering of criticism has much to do with a foundational gendering of citizenship, politics and truth whose hold developed gradually. The organizing notion of citizenship depends on a disinterested appraisal of the public and political spheres, so that one's virtue can operate to benefit the public good.

The centrality of criticism, as part of that civic disinterestedness, matured along with republicanism as the reigning ethos of both the modern nation-state and liberal society. In the early days of republican thought women believed that they were the quintessential "disinterested observers" because of their positioning outside commercial and political life, and many men accepted this argument. But republican politics and constitutional and positive law after the

French and American revolutions increasingly designated men as the universal subject or citizen, and thus the impartial observers, and those with a special access to transcendent truth. As Carol Pateman has theorized, this construction of the citizen as a universal and virtuous critic was accompanied by the institutionalization of a hierarchy enshrining male privilege and female inferiority: the sexual contract that underlay the social contract. The disinterested critic of both politics and culture, as well as the specially empowered citizen, was male. The inferior and disempowered woman concomitantly had a vision that was narrower, limited and—after it became feminist—partisan or political.

Seeing the male critic as the upholder of male privilege in the guise of universal disinterestedness, one better understands today's fraught climate of debate over gender equality. As affirmative action makes a few pinpricks into traditional bastions of power, their defenders rally to the rubric of critical standards—whether in politics or aesthetics—to fortify the masculinity of the elite media. Modern notions of "universality" have always masked special entitlements. Nor does one have to stretch one's brains to understand why female editors such as Tina Brown jam the pages of a "women's issue" with male authors. To paraphrase the cartoonist R. Crumb, women will do anything to get near male power.

Bonnie Smith is a professor of history at Rutgers University and co-author of *The Challenge of the West: Peoples and Cultures from the Stone Age to the Global Age* (D.C. Heath, 1995).

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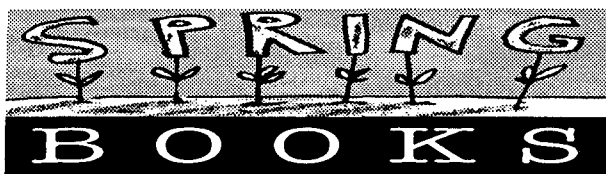
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## essentials





## Smart women, few choices

By Leora Tanenbaum

**D**espite the gentle rhetoric of "choice," abortion is not a neutral selection from some grand lifestyle menu. Abortion eradicates the assumption that an unwed woman who becomes pregnant is sexually unrestrained and "bad" and therefore deserves to give birth against her wishes as a form of punishment. It allows women the self-determination that men simply take for granted. As such, abortion provides a freedom no less significant than the freedom of speech. And just as the freedom of speech is denied prejudicially to so many Americans, so too is abortion limited to only a lucky few.

Although the struggle for abortion rights might seem to unite women across class lines, access to abortion varies widely according to income and geography. Only 17 states, for instance, fund abortions for poor women. A third of all obstetric and gynecology residency programs in the United States do not train doctors to perform abortions. And an astonishing 80 percent of counties in the United States have no abortion services at all. Clearly, there is no "choice" for women who can't afford to travel for an abortion.

It has always been this way. In the years before the 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* decision, unhappily pregnant poor women were forced to risk their lives by going to incompetent abortionists. But for those who were fortunate enough to live in Chicago between 1969 and 1973 and know about "Jane," the underground network of abortion providers chronicled in Laura Kaplan's fascinating social history, having an abortion was almost an empowering experience.

In the four years before the Supreme Court decided abortion was legal, Jane performed 11,000 safe abortions. At any one time Jane consisted of 10 to 30 members, with about 100 in all over their four-year existence. Kaplan, a former Jane member, interviewed dozens of her former colleagues as well as women who had abortions through Jane and several of the doctors involved.

What emerges is an account of hardship and desperation not far removed from the experiences of women seeking abortions today. "Every week desperate women of every

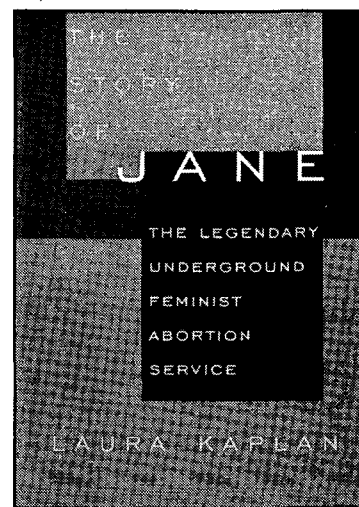
class, race and ethnicity telephoned Jane," Kaplan recalls. "They were women whose husbands or boyfriends forbade them to use contraceptives; women who had not used contraceptives. They were older women who thought they were no longer fertile; young girls who did not understand their reproductive physiology. They were women who could not care for a child and women who did not want a child."

Initially Jane was a counseling and referral service. Members screened abortionists to determine which ones were the most safe, professional and respectful of women, and then hooked them up with patients. They particularly trusted one abortionist, "Nick," with whom they worked very closely, despite his entrepreneurial approach. ("He thought abortions were like mink coats: lots of women wanted them, but not everyone could afford one," Kaplan explains.) But when they discovered that Nick was not, as he had led them to believe, a physician, Jane members experienced the classic feminist "click" of self-awareness and empowerment. If Nick could perform abortions without medical training, well then, so could they.

"Jenny," the principal organizer, had already convinced Nick to train her to perform abortions. Now, realizing that "doctors weren't the All Powerful Oz," she began to perform them on her own, and she trained several other Jane members.

To elude the police, Jane set up a formal gathering place in a residential apartment, known as the Front. Periodically, a driver would take several women over to the Place, the apartment where abortions were conducted. Despite this subterfuge, seven members of Jane were arrested in the spring of 1972; charges against them were dropped the following year after abortion became legal.

Although the group was supposedly run as a collective, Kaplan admits that a core group of several women who learned the abortion procedure held most of the power and made most of the decisions. This intrusion of hierarchy caused endless tension: "Each desperate woman who called was treated with



**The Story of Jane: The  
Legendary Underground  
Feminist Abortion Service**  
By Laura Kaplan  
Pantheon  
314 pp., \$25

**Why I Am An Abortion Doctor**  
By Suzanne T. Poppema, M.D.  
with Mike Henderson  
Prometheus  
266 pp., \$25.95

the utmost respect, but within the group the backbiting and gossip were endless."

For all its faults, though, Jane was revolutionary—and for reasons that go far beyond their provision of a much-needed but illegal service. Forced outside the law by conscience, Jane members readily questioned other institutions. "[T]he drapes, the uniforms, the barriers that the medical profession erected between patient and practitioner," they slowly began to understand, "were not a function of either the woman's needs or the needs of the situation, but were about appearances and status, like a general's gold braid." Once Jane members began to provide the abortions themselves, they resolved to apply a more just and humane standard: to treat their patients with dignity and to offer the service on a sliding scale, so that no one who couldn't afford it was turned away.

In these days before *Our Bodies, Our-Selves*, most of the women who came to Jane lacked basic knowledge about reproduction and their own bodies. As a result, Jane members felt responsible for explaining each step of the abortion procedure and continuously checking to make sure their patients felt comfortable. One former patient tells Kaplan that her abortion was "positive and affirming." On the way home she kept thinking, "I just had an illegal abortion, and it was best medical experience I've ever had."

Although two decades have passed since *Roe vs. Wade*, the work environment of abortionist Dr. Suzanne Poppema sounds very similar to that of the underground Jane. Poppema doesn't have to shuttle patients between a Front and Place, but she does have to wear a bulletproof vest to protect herself from violent pro-lifers. "I refuse to mask my work in qualifications or apologies," Poppema declares in *Why I Am An Abortion Doctor*. "What I do is right and good and important." Despite its baggy prose, self-referential excesses and Poppema's annoying tendency to lump all her opponents into one monolithic group she calls "the patriarchy," *Why I Am An Abortion Doctor* provides an excellent overview of the post-*Roe* scene from a perspective rarely heard in the clamorous abortion debates.

Poppema, like Jane, understands that abortion has as much to do with class as it does with gender. "The poorest and least educated of women will, when faced with an unwanted pregnancy, make precisely the same decision as that of a Harvard-educated woman with money in her bank account," Poppema argues. "The tragedy, then, is that society could deny access to abortion based solely on a woman's ability to pay for the procedure."

Poppema points out that wanted children in any society have tremendous economic, social and emotional advantages over unwanted children. When parents are forced to bear and

raise unwanted children, misery is practically guaranteed. And not only for the children. As director of an abortion clinic near Seattle, Poppema is able to observe how women feel about themselves when they have to decide whether or not to abort. All too often, they enter the clinic apologizing. They feel guilty and ashamed. In contrast to the pro-life myth of careless and carefree women who abort their fetuses without a twinge of regret, Poppema offers a portrait of patients who, more often than not, break down and cry. "No one revels in ending an unwanted pregnancy. To believe that they do would be to imagine that women would willfully become pregnant for no other reason than to be able to come in for an abortion."

Although she is part of the medical establishment that Jane derided as something of a fraud, there's no doubt that Poppema genuinely cares about the well-being of her patients and treats them as equals. She bends over backward to ensure that her patients are emotionally ready for their abortions. In fact, Poppema says, she won't perform the procedure if a patient hasn't come to terms with her decision. And she makes sure that the clinic itself is a pleasant place. "When patients visit us it isn't uncommon for them to say: 'Your clinic is beautiful,' as though it's a big surprise. What, no screaming? No blood all over the floors?" Poppema says drily, dispelling yet another common myth.

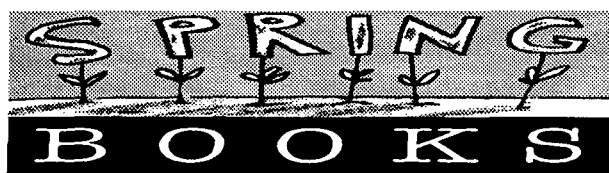
Poppema also performs second-trimester abortions without apology because she understands, from personal experience, the mechanics of denial. She herself was unaware of one of her own pregnancies two decades ago and had to have a second-trimester abortion. "I am not a stupid woman and I am not malicious. Yet I was absolutely unaware of the pregnancy," she recalls. "I had completely repressed the thought that my sexual experience had caused the pregnancy." When a graduate of Harvard Medical School denies her own pregnancy, it's no surprise that so many other, less fortunate women do, too.

If either of the two nonsurgical "abortion pills"—methotrexate or mifepristone (popularly known as RU 486)—becomes available in the United States, many of the obstacles to abortion will disappear: No more class divide, no more sense of shame or stupidity. Poppema's clinic is one of a dozen that has tested the mifepristone pill, which causes a woman to abort her fetus without surgery, over the past two years. On the other hand, she notes, prejudice against women getting abortions is too deeply ingrained to melt away overnight. The availability of an abortion pill makes "the whole notion of abortion almost too easy for women." And why should something so basic to women's freedom be so easy?

Leora Tanenbaum writes for *Ms.*, *Mirabella* and other publications. She regularly writes on gender for *In These Times*.



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## History lessons

By Jim Sleeper

From nine musty, hand-scrawled ledgers that sat untended for nearly a century in the stacks of Harvard's Business School library, historian Nick Salvatore has rescued a powerful testament from the heart of the 19th-century American republic. Amos Webber, a black man born to free parents in Bucks County, Pa., in 1826, was initiated into political activity by elders assisting the Underground Railroad; served a white Philadelphia industrialist as a trusted working man and aide; and participated—at one point, in Abraham Lincoln's presence—in the liberation of Richmond, which he entered on April 4, 1865, as a quartermaster sergeant in the black Fifth Cavalry. After the war, he resettled in Worcester, Mass., where he worked for another white captain of industry, organized "colored veterans" and fraternal associations, and fought for racial equality until his death in 1904.

In both Philadelphia and Worcester, Webber's black community had its destitute, even sodden "underclass"; but its working-class core was patriarchal, aspiringly bourgeois and intensely moral, indeed, moralistic. It was staunchly patriotic, even in the teeth of the racism that eroded Reconstruction and shunted aside those whom Webber called the country's black "Loyal Sons." It was capitalistic, protesting blacks' exclusion from the pre-Gilded Age industrial arrangements they otherwise often admired. Even more striking, many of its "solid citizens" were quietly noble and unflinchingly brave.

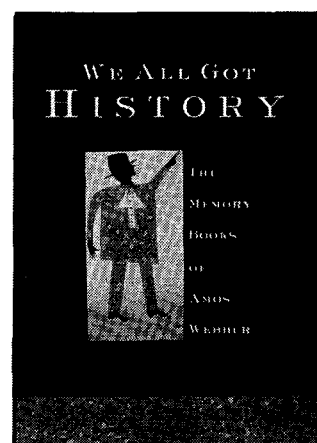
Surprised? Get used to it. Every teacher should have the courage to assign, and every student the pleasure of reading, this new American classic. Certainly it should be required in every school in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, whose 19th-century civic, political and economic life it so richly details. If, instead, the book sinks like a stone, its descent will track the depths of everything that political correctness has cost us. For as Salvatore's careful study makes clear, consigning Amos Webber's voice back to the dustbin of history because it expresses many now-unfashionable political sentiments would further weaken our flagging efforts to recall—

and imagine anew—the aspirations to a transracial civic culture that sustained black Americans during the 19th century.

If, on the other hand, Salvatore's book succeeds, it may illuminate a way out of our national and cultural slough of despond. To comprehend the civil rights movement's awesomely disciplined, awesomely loving strategies and the larger civic culture in which they moved, it is necessary to read this primal, primary and now wonderfully accessible source. Webber was a man of his time, not ours, but his story is that of ordinary Americans, white as well as black, who broke the moral and civic ground that Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks and far more unsung heroes like them tilled later, to such great effect.

An aspirant to full membership in the vibrant economy and democratic polity that Tocqueville had recently celebrated, Webber began his ledgers as a record of meteorological observations, noting the temperature and weather conditions every day from December 1854 until October 1860, and from December 1870 through early 1904, when he died. Salvatore does not surmise that the ledgers for the 1860s were lost; Webber seems, by his own indirect account, to have suspended his chronicle while grieving for the death of his only son at age 5, and engaging the war after which he moved to Worcester and resumed his writing. On what he styled his "Local Pages," Webber recorded in spare prose those national and local events, conflicts, crises and festivities that keenly interested him or in which he participated directly. For two years he wrote reportorial columns under a pseudonym for a black Massachusetts newspaper. But he was never expansive, and he rarely alluded to his own family life, friendships and personal feelings.

Using those clues to search moldy local newspapers, government records and other evidence in which Webber's name sometimes appears, Salvatore, a seasoned practitioner of "history from the bottom up," deftly reconstructs the neighborhoods, workplaces, churches, fraternal associations, military maneuvers, street marches and festivities in which Webber participated. "The question of how individuals interact with a broader, received society and culture, and from that exchange carve for themselves lives both private and public, had always interested me," Salvatore explains in his introduction, and the book is mainly his account, laced with Webber's terse observations, of the experiences and perspectives of the black community and worldview he knew. Unfortunately,



**We All Got History:**  
**The Memory Books of**  
**Amos Webber**  
 By Nick Salvatore  
 Times Books  
 443 pp., \$25



such undertakings no longer interest academic adepts of “identity” politics who think, as Salvatore puts it, that “a text is not complete until the reader infuses it with his own understandings. ... Historical objectivity may indeed be elusive,” he acknowledges, “but the presence of human subjectivity does not therefore release the historian from a sustained effort to comprehend another’s past.” One can only wish that Salvatore’s insistence that we truly respect “the otherness” of “a particular past” were shared by more writers of monographs on such topics as “Gender and the Thimble Workers of OshKosh, 1853-56.” Because it isn’t, it will be interesting to track the fate of *We All Got History* in the journals of the historically correct.

Well, then, how *could* one be proud of one’s blackness yet remain close to, compatible with, and even admiring of one’s white employers? How *could* one sustain one’s patriotism when the Grand Army of the Republic was permeated with racism? It won’t do to dismiss Webber as a mere creature of the contradictions of his time, a man hobbled and limited by conventions he couldn’t control. That would betray a poor understanding of history-making, indeed. Webber was enough of a “race man” to show up in courtrooms where fugitive slaves’ fates were being decided and to write scathingly of John Brown’s execution (Salvatore preserves Webber’s misspellings and grammatical errors, while interjecting his own comments):

The soldiers fife was heard, to play the mournful sound the drum with its solmn taps, gave Virginia to understand that it took 3000 soldiers to execute one man; Governor Wise, stood appalld, to think that he had honored Mr. Brown, with an escort of so many soldiers. ... “Once Brown’s ‘firm step & undaunted heart’ led him atop the scaffold [Salvatore continues], Webber envisioned Brown ‘looking around: ... He saw nothing but soldiers (3000) no citizens stood near him; He had nothing to say; at 11-1/4 O’clock he paid the penalty of Virginia.’ ”

Webber’s admiring comments about white captains of industry (who were paternally rooted and engaged in the civic life of their communities) and his “easy acceptance of the icon of the self-made man reflected a commanding characteristic of American culture,” Salvatore acknowledges. “But it was also based on experiences that had begun, at the latest, with Webber’s encounter with [his first Philadelphia employer] Charles S. Wurts’s ‘Strict Rules.’ In his relations with elite white employers over a long working life, Webber had found men whose commitment to racial equality, relative to most white Americans, proved heartening. He had also found in these employers virtues worth emulating.” In other words, he had no fear of “acting white,” and that may account for his rapid promotions from private to corporal to sergeant by white officers during the war, when, at one point, in a searing but not always satisfying irony, he and his black Fifth Cavalry were assigned to guard white Confederate prisoners at gunpoint.

In Worcester after the war, Webber was admitted to a white post of the Grand Army of the Republic veterans organization, but he watched its integrationist posture erode in the 1880s, protesting in court its rejections of black applicants and, at the same time, organizing a “Colored Veterans” association. Many years later, angered by the Ku Klux Klan’s violent assaults on Reconstruction state governments in the South, he wrote that

the Old Slave-holding Rebels are dying out inch by inch at the very thought of his slaves are men among men, and enjoying the right of the U.S. Gov; of which they fought for, against their Old Masters. This is the Bumble Bee, that sting him (the old Master). And that is why those colored men are murdered today: Because of their loyalty to the Union.

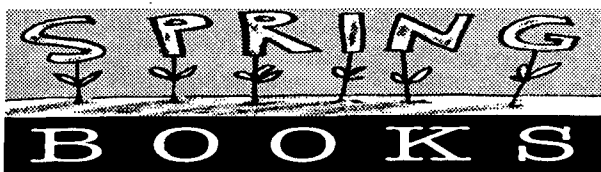
In Webber’s own experience, it was only white louts who rioted; he helped to ensure that black protesters kept their dignity, much as John Brown had done. “In upholding a stern moral code,” Salvatore notes, Webber’s

black churches and fraternal organizations encouraged members to positively direct those aspects of their individual and collective lives over which they did possess some discretion. These exhortations actually spoke to a deep sense of individual and collective identity and pride ... [and] erected the institutional framework for the expression of a distinctive black culture in the North ... whose synergism and diversity reflected the labyrinthine circumstances of being black, Christian and American in an environment largely hostile to their very presence.

Using Webber’s few allusions to Lizzie, his wife of 50 years, Salvatore ransacks the historical evidence to reconstruct her own activism in the House of Ruth ladies’ auxiliary to his Odd Fellows lodge. He also describes the couple’s quiet sharing of many social and political burdens. But what is most striking is their and many other families’ maintenance, even amid near penury, of a “bourgeois” dignity that whites recognized only intermittently—on occasions that Salvatore recounts. Such fortitude, born of yearning and adversity, would later be disdained, even lampooned, as servile. Amos Webber’s Memory Book shows beyond the shadow of a doubt that it was not; indeed, it laid the foundation for later black advances.

Salvatore recounts the Webbers’ removal of their son’s grave from Philadelphia to the plot in Worcester that they had purchased for themselves, and he describes the husband’s and wife’s 1904 burials, eight months apart, next to their son. “Gone but not forgotten” are the words on Lizzie’s tombstone. And with these words Salvatore ends this instructive and moving account of how the 19th-century American Dilemma, in all its paradoxical but never hopeless detail, looked from the bottom up.

Jim Sleeper is the author of *The Closest of Strangers: Liberalism and the Politics of Race* in New York.



# Adventures in the skin trade

By Chris Lehmann

**A** sprawling, richly imagined political satire, *The Last Integrationist* is everything that the vastly overpraised "political" novel *Primary Colors* should have been. Indeed, following the tragicomic, exhilarating twists of its plot and characterizations, the reader succumbs to reveries that would right the lazy indignities critics have foisted on American readers. If only, one wonders, a book this full of ideas, bracing conflict and provocative comment on the tangled symbiosis of politics and race in America were to win the attention the media lavished on ungainly blockbusters like *Primary Colors*....

The prospect, alas, is so unlikely that the fantasy breaks off before the sentence ends. And *The Last Integrationist*, much preoccupied with race and written by a first-time black novelist, itself makes it clear why such idle daydreams are doomed. A shot across the bow of the comfortable orthodoxies of both black and white political opinion, it boasts a message that is as unpalatable to the media as it is politically indispensable: The neo-tribal encirclement of American citizens by ideologies of sham racial authenticity is choking off the most elemental bonds of family, political and moral life. At a time when political discourse and celebrity culture insistently press African-Americans into ever narrower categories of separate, indignantly asserted racial identity, *The Last Integrationist* courageously charts the myriad, stifling tortures this kind of retreat visits on ordinary Americans, black and white alike.

At first glance, however, few of the novel's characters and situations seem all that ordinary. Set in the near future, *The Last Integrationist* presents an America just a notch more brutal, more hopeless and more media-addled than the one we know today. The country's party system has been dissolved in a "Second Constitutional Convention," and reconfigured into a pair of mushy rival political conglomerates, known as the American and National parties.

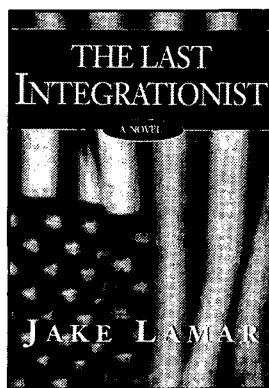
But the country's political life, however contentless its institutional forms may be, is also riven by a set of broader cultural and social crises, most of them provoked by the failures of racial justice. There is, first of all, a pronounced military escalation of the drug wars: Abandoned Cold War military bases have been converted into "Drug Reeducation

Centers," where inner-city youths are forcibly regimented into lives of Spartan discipline reinforced by eerily empty slogans of self-esteem; a battery of armed "Federal Youth Corps" recruits enforces curfews in black urban neighborhoods. And criminal executions are now bread-and-circus spectacles, broadcast on nationwide television from major sports stadiums, featuring a full complement of post-punishment entertainments. Even civil disturbances have a new authoritarian, through-the-looking-glass quality: White suburbanites, emboldened by constant and casual public references to black killers and drug dealers as "parasites," take to rioting in their winding, sleepy streets in the wake of a political assassination with racial overtones. And meanwhile, the federal government, while putting a cheerily non-ideological face on all this turmoil, is taking up plans for eugenic control of the poor, the drug-blighted and the black.

In the hands of lesser writers, such material can degenerate into static litanies of didactic scaremongering, the byword of notoriously alarmist, largely unreadable works like Sinclair Lewis' *It Can't Happen Here*. But Jake Lamar, who had previously authored a coming-of-age memoir, *Bourgeois Blues*, peoples *The Last Integrationist* not with flat, ideologically driven caricatures but with closely observed and carefully rounded-out characters, who with palpable surprise keep discovering the wrenching contradictions and paradoxes of race in America cropping up unbidden in their hearts.

Or more precisely, on their skins. Many are parties to, or products of, interracial romances, often driven to violate the country's social codes of race separation in spite of themselves. The novel's central character, for example, is the United States' first black attorney general, a former civil rights attorney turned law-and-order avenger named Melvin Hutchinson. Despite the pendulum swings of his judicial politics, Hutchinson hews to a strict code of "choosing black," as Lamar terms it. Even as he scales the heights of the white establishment, he exclusively fraternizes with similarly situated blacks and only suffers the company of white colleagues out of professional necessity.

Nevertheless, Hutchinson lets his guard down, briefly, to have a drunken dalliance with a white woman, and in the process sires a son, who comes into adulthood without Hutchinson ever acknowledging his paternity. As Hutchinson finds himself the odds-on favorite to replace his administration's incapacitated vice president, he is also set on a collision course with this long-repressed transgression. These tensed poles of identity-fueled ambition and actual self-knowledge pull at him mercilessly, bringing the book's core con-



**The Last Integrationist**  
By Jake Lamar  
Crown Books  
344 pp., \$24

flict—the unresolved crisis of vice-presidential succession—to a dizzying head.

While Hutchinson supplies the book's central dramatic tension, Lamar's ensemble of major characters—of which there are at least half-a-dozen—all experience, in varying degrees, the same bruising struggle: Their identities claimed in advance by interested communities of racial confrontation, they struggle to reach a self-awareness that manages, however fugitively and painfully, to transcend race. Here, for example, is the book's female protagonist, Hutchinson's niece, Emma (herself enmeshed in a long-lived, though less than happy interracial relationship), thinking her own racial politics out loud to a black nationalist interlocutor, a self-described "freelance ethnocentrist-intellectual." "Sorry, you can't be both," she snaps in reply, and then explains:

Ethnocentrism is, by its very nature, anti-intellectual. Ethnocentrism is an ideology of blood and skin. And as a great man once wrote, 'Blood and skin do not *think*.' ... If blood and skin determine all, it becomes impossible to appreciate—to imagine—the human complexity of someone whose blood and skin—whose culture—are different from your own. You can't imagine otherness, so you can't have compassion.

It's a credit to Lamar's sound instincts and unsparing vision that he makes good on Emma's promise of complexity by having her become involved with her conversational sparring partner here, a cultural studies grad student named Rashid Scuggs. Nor does Lamar let any sentimental convention, or his clear sympathy for Emma's views, prevail in the relationship. It, like most of the book's relationships, ends tragically, but not because the partners aren't able to imaginatively enter each other's worlds. Indeed, after their initial encounter, Emma finds herself ruminating on her own collegiate attraction to the comforts of "blood and skin." As a resident of a quasi-separatist dorm (at the puckishly named, fictional Vymar College) she relished being

surrounded by people like Rashid, young African-Americans enjoying the privilege of a superior education, brimming with contempt for anyone who wasn't like them, staying up late together recounting indulgently, almost cherishing, every slight they had ever been dealt by the white world, exchanging war stories about the insults, the oppression, they had suffered, nursing each other's wounds, reinforcing each other's prejudices, hunkering down, exulting in the safety, the solace, of self-segregation. ... There was something bracing about living one's life in a permanent snit.

It's also to Lamar's credit that he doesn't let these searching, interior debates overwhelm the book's freewheeling satirical tone. *The Last Integrationist*, while a deadly serious book, is also a greatly comic one, where all manner of pop culture figures, manipulative racemongers and arriviste hipsters come in for richly conceived, well-deserved scorn.

There's a Stallone-esque matinee idol, Nick Necropolis, who co-hosts the televised executions (the series is titled *Elimination*) and stars in all-too-plausibly titled studies of cinematic mayhem and vigilanteism. ("The title of the movie appeared in blood red letters: *Justifiable Homicide II*. 'This time,' the voice-over snarled, 'it's ideological.' ") There's the Oprah-inspired daytime talk maven, Mavis Temple—"a temple of self-esteem"—who provides moralistic wrap-ups of the executions and is just generally "one of the most famous people on the planet ... less a person than a fabulously transcendent personage." There's also her white, ambitious executive producer (and later husband), Seth Winkler, who "adhering to the latest trend in androgynous multiculturalism," sports a faux-Japanese haircut and a green plaid kilt. Indeed, the Mavis-Seth union provides a mordant mockery of Emma's reveries on life beyond racialism. Contemplating the children the couple will adopt, Seth hits upon the new American faith of transracialism: "It occurred to Seth that, as the children of Mavis Temple, they wouldn't really be white or black or any race at all. They would be something better, something so much more transcendent than that. They would be famous."

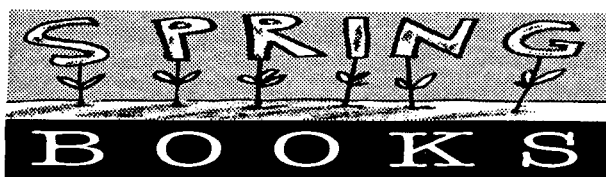
Meanwhile, still larger forces in the world conspire to further undermine the promise of freedom contained in Emma's hope to treat her race as "*just my race*," not "an accomplishment—or an embarrassment." She gets dragged remorselessly into the politics of racial confrontation at every turn: An aspiring photographer, she mounts an exhibition of nude studies of interracial couples—promptly triggering a boycott from a group of aggrieved black protesters. And even as she's transporting her belongings to set up provisional housekeeping with Rashid, she gets caught in one of the new white suburbanite riots. It's all a delirious counterpoint to the way her Uncle Melvin's public career falls to his private indiscretions: Emma's private world is steadily overrun by hectoring "communities" of complaint that have no interest in understanding her at all. Despairing, she bitterly breaks off her inner debate over race and selfhood:

It occurred to her that there were no people left in the United States of America; only your own people. Only races, genders, ethnicities, sexual orientations, cultures. What you believed and how you acted on those beliefs mattered far less than what you looked like and who you slept with. Conviction, an individual consciousness, meant nothing when blood and skin were all.

Finally, Emma leaves the country entirely, explaining with chastened resignation to a new, African acquaintance that "it's not a good place for black people."

Lamar evidently shares this sentiment with Emma, too—he now lives in Paris. But he seems so sure in his vision of the country's racial pathologies, cultural absurdities and political self-delusions that it's hard to imagine him staying away for long. Or so readers of this fine, harrowing, compassionate novel can't help but hope.





# Meta heads

By Catherine Mason

Much contemporary fiction relies on a hybrid vision of the historical and imagined past, placed alongside the mundane but utterly self-conscious present to invoke a usually ironic, and often enlightening, record of human perception in the late 20th century. Indeed, that facsimile world, where documentary history merges with mannered self-referential meaning, makes for a good definition of postmodern narrative. Two new collections of short fiction from the Dalkey Archive Press' American Literature Series float freely in this state of suspended temporal animation.

In her afterword to *The Red Shoes*, Karen Elizabeth Gordon praises the "guardian angels of metafiction" at the off-beat press for reissuing the work, which she believed had been the victim of a "genre gap" between fiction and non-fiction upon its first publication in 1989.

In Gordon's case, the misinterpretation is to the point, for this unusual novel takes the form of an "unbuttoned lexicon," a fantastical dictionary and literary guide complete with textual notes from whimsical sources and quotations from unwritten tales she believes "everyone in the world has read." Meanwhile, Susan Daitch's *Storytown* remains well within the province of narrative fiction, while clinging firmly to metafiction's avant-garde pretensions—sparseness, duplicity and, above all, irony. Her stories employ "strange displacements of the ordinary" in an effort to transcend prosaic distinctions between art and life.

Metafiction, a movement that can be traced at least back to the mid-'50s and the quirky fictional voices of Raymond Queneau and Donald Barthelme, has enjoyed a little-remarked but unmistakable staying power in American fiction. The genre has recently become populated with more and more women writers, who have used the form to both recognize and subvert the representations of gender in society.

Both Gordon and Daitch trade freely in memory, juxtaposing the present and past to heighten their ironic observations. Gordon is obsessed with the ironic qualities of language and with using the stories of the past to provide witty commentary on the present; Daitch stresses an irony of cru-

elly defeated expectations. And each heightens the intellectual over the narrative possibilities of their work.

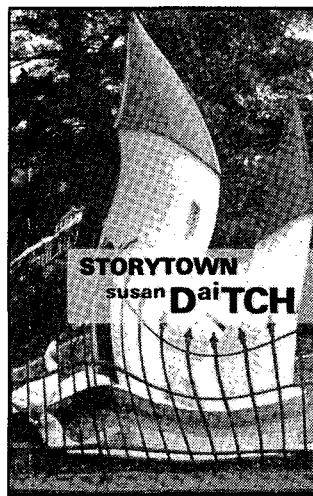
Gordon's stories are based on a chance find made by Anja, the "wandering seamstress from Croatia," of a tailor's dummy "stuffed with shredded manuscripts," which she and her partner stitch together like a raiment. The garment is the occasion for Gordon's brief set pieces (of usually a paragraph or two)—flights of lexical fancy, fairy tales and myths made modern as the seamstresses present us with, for instance, the first-person recollections of a savvy Cinderella and a little match girl who tells stories through the cold night.

Previously known for her gothic grammar manuals, *The Well-Tempered Sentence* and *The Transitive Vampire*, Gordon clearly wants *The Red Shoes* to be read as fiction, though the stories bear more than a passing resemblance to the language guides. Indeed, several of the same eccentric characters who illustrated sentence structure or syntax in these earlier books emerge in *The Red Shoes* as the bearers of these "tattered tales."

In the tradition of metafictional tale-spinners, Gordon and her characters are fascinated with words as "windows through which we climb into stories onto which they open." Language is clothing, specifically underclothing, that both "hides and reveals" the narrative like a "diaphanous nightgown."

Even though *The Red Shoes* is a brief work, nothing is spare or minimalist about Gordon, and it is no criticism to say that one wants more from her provocative characters

and half-drawn narratives on the order of, say, that mistress of the feminist fairy tale, Angela Carter. Gordon's prose, while often effulgent, remains succinct—a blessing in most postmodern discourse. But like other postmodernists, Gordon often leaves us more intellectually tickled than emotionally satisfied. This makes for only episodic engagement with the book's characters, who are, in any event, glimpsed only briefly. Gordon's snappy non-sequiturs and aphoristic phrasing ("she knitted a loud woolen cap of her recriminations and yanked it over his head"), effective teaching tools in her early work, here circumscribe promising characters such as Yolanta, the self-proclaimed "nympho-bibliomaniac," or the timid specter Timofey, whose mystery is never revealed.



**The Red Shoes and Other Tattered Tales**  
By Karen Elizabeth Gordon  
Dalkey Archive Press  
192 pp., \$12.95

**Storytown**  
By Susan Daitch  
Dalkey Archive Press  
204 pp., \$12.95

While Gordon and her characters mine the possibilities of language in all its quirkiness, Susan Daitch concentrates on the close rendering of visual images. In "On Habit," collected in her new book, *Storytown*, film footage or photographs of the 1939 World's Fair Futurama exhibit inspire observations based upon strictly contemporary experiences of that future. Yet it is a mere series of snapshots, and does not sustain any fictional narrative. Elsewhere, her characters do not discriminate between life and art in their common effort to make meaning from a dearth of meaning in their world. It isn't always a pretty picture.

Daitch's *Storytown*, like Gordon's work, self-consciously stitches together fictions from fictions. The volume contains many of the reflective visual elements found in Daitch's novels, *L.C.* (1986) and *The Colorist* (1990). Whether Daitch describes the plastic kitsch settings of Storytown Theme Park in upstate New York or a 17th-century domestic scene by Dutch painter Jan Steen, she interweaves high and low artistic references into familiar symbols that impose a pictorial narrative for her characters. In the best-realized of her stories, "Doubling," the protagonist Claudia, a court sketch artist, must constantly face the uses and significance of the past—even the recent past of her own short-lived stint as an art forger in league with her mysterious visiting Italian cousin. When Claudia finally concedes that the truth is imperceptible, or worse, meaningless, she must return from the promise of her drawings to the disappointments of her life.

Yet, in most of her stories, Daitch imbues inanimate objects and synthetic settings with a shorthand meaning that belies more substantial thought. What, for instance, does the film *A Fish Called Wanda* really have to do with Eleanor Marx's disillusion upon her first visit to America? Daitch's stories are intellectual rather than experiential—her slices of life do not seem to come from life. As a result, her various narrative threads often come unraveled. In one story, for example, she poses the intriguing situation of an art restorer who questions whether to save the accepted masterpiece or the unknown underpainting, but proceeds to bury it with a half-dozen such ideas that are never resolved. For all her striking imagery and spot-on irony, the stories' plots remain contrived, highlighting nothing so much as the author's own aloofness.

Perhaps that is the point. But surely one of the less appealing aspects of the new fiction is the author's often distressing detachment from the lessons or even the inherent drama of the narrative she creates. Everywhere, there is a smug satisfaction in recognition. We understand the significance of the clues left by the past,

and can even lend significance to the trivial, then wink knowingly at the future, which, even if left with a bankrupt cultural heritage (among other woes), can at least make no mistake that their predecessors "got it." Time stands still in this world, in which things are always likened to other things: Barbie and Mona Lisa are equal objects of beauty, and a young American tries to seduce Oscar Wilde with a hot dog.

And it's this flattened-out set of references that finally calls into question the larger project of metafiction itself. The insular, detached prose of the writers in each case produces a similar result, leaving their characters—and ultimately, their readers—curiously affectless and unsatisfied. It may well be that metafiction reflects, as Daitch suggests in her story "Incunabala #3," the notion that we can no longer rely on fiction to mirror lived experience and that it is sheer romance to "read everything as if it were a story." But can't it be as plausibly argued that we need the inspiration of fiction's rendering of other lives in order to fully imagine our own? On this calculus, the practitioners of metafiction fail, their ambitions too limited and their vocabularies too deliberately circumscribed by their own clever, elliptical self-awareness. Do we really want to identify with, or feel like, these characters, floundering in the world of short-circuited emotions and stories once removed? Must we, in other words, accept that fiction can hope to do little more than leave us all dressed up with no one to be? ◀

Catherine Mason is a historian and writer specializing in cultural and women's history.



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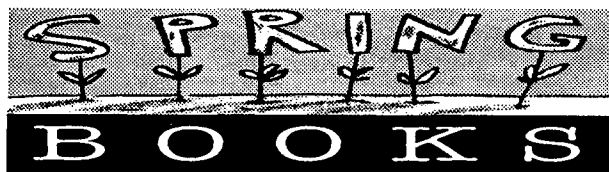
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## Socialism stymied

By Joel Robbins

**T**he first thing to admire about this book is its title. It's rare, after all, that not one but two vital, straightforwardly posed questions make their way onto the cover of an academic book. And it's rarer still that these books actually deliver the goods that such questions call for. But in the case of these questions, few are better positioned than Katherine Verdery to do just that. Verdery, a professor of anthropology at Johns Hopkins University and one of the field's leading Europeanists, has carried out extraordinarily extensive fieldwork in both rural and urban Romania beginning in 1973 and continuing through 1994. In this collection of previously published essays, she presents a theory of how "formerly existing socialism" operated and examines the social life it fostered both before and after 1989. While tackling most of the big issues that obsess Western observers of "The Transition To Capitalism"—markets, civil society, nationalism, privatization and "mafiaization"—Verdery starts always with real people's thoughts and experiences, putting her inquiries on a solid footing that both statistics-heavy economic reports and arid efforts at political theorizing conspicuously lack. This solidity is a boon to those who want to understand how formerly existing socialism came to be what it was—and a warning to those who traffic in simple models of how it is being surpassed.

Drawing heavily on the work of Eastern European scholars, Verdery pitches her general theory of socialism against the totalitarian image of centralized control that, while no longer current in academic circles, still dominates popular Western conceptions of how the "evil empire" operated. Against this stereotype she stresses the considerable room for resistance that people carved out for themselves in socialist systems, and argues that this resistance ultimately played a large part in the systems' surprisingly rapid downfall.

Verdery argues that socialist systems were founded in, and defined by, an "economy of shortage." She uses this term to refer to more than the shortages of the bread lines, although they are of course part of the story. But Verdery also points to the shortages of raw materials and of labor power that

made it impossible for managers to meet the quotas set by central planners. Experience taught managers to anticipate shortages, so they padded their orders—asking for twice the amount of leather they needed to make the target amount of shoes, for example—and then hoarded the surplus to be used or traded for other materials from managers elsewhere when the shortages did finally come. All of this padding and hoarding then fed back into the system, ensuring eventually that materials were indeed chronically in short supply. And managers were ultimately in competition with each other to procure as much of them as possible. Planners, long inured to inflated orders, eventually had little idea of what different productive sectors actually required to do their jobs. In the end, the planning that was at the heart of the socialist scheme became sharply disengaged from reality.

Such compromised planning produced many hardships, but the one most damaging to the socialist state followed on its failure to secure production of sufficient consumer goods. Verdery argues convincingly that the state's legitimacy rested primarily on its role as a paternalistic redistributor of goods. In order to fulfill its part of the "socialist social contract," the party-state needed to accumulate the means of production—to assure itself a monopoly over the power to create and distribute the things people needed. But as a way of binding people to a central leader, this setup harbors a critical contradiction that in various forms besets redistributive economies everywhere: The logic of the system leads the center to strive to accumulate more and more productive resources, at the expense of the political legitimacy that comes from giving key products out to supporters. In socialist economies, this contradiction meant that the state championed the expansion of the sort of heavy industry that manufactures the means of production, rather than expanding the capacity to produce consumer goods for redistribution. As shortages became a dominant concern not only for managers, but for consumers as well, the state's legitimacy crumbled.

Eventually, systemic failure sent everyone to the extensive "second economies" that existed throughout the socialist world, using materials and time stolen or borrowed from work to procure goods and earn extra money. Drivers for the forestry service could steal wood to sell, gas-station attendants could pump extra gas, and other laborers could steal time from work to cultivate private garden plots. Managers could sell from their hoarded stocks, and bureaucrats, notoriously, could

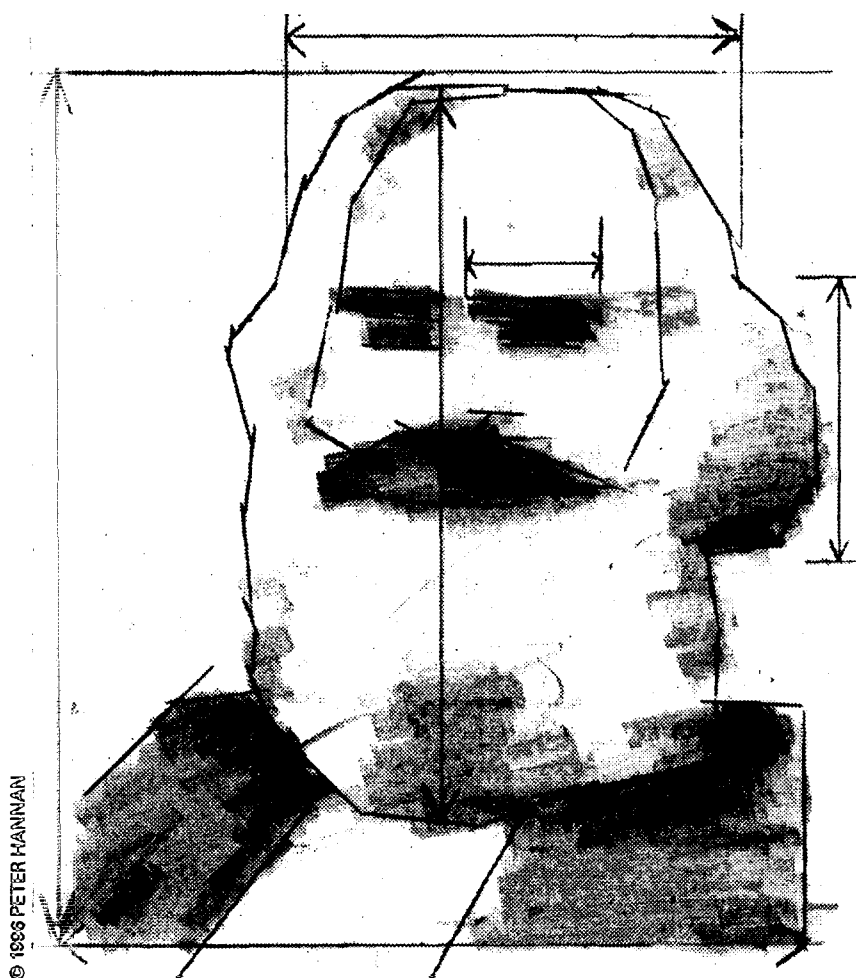
**WHAT WAS  
SOCIALISM,  
AND WHAT  
COMES NEXT?**

KATHERINE VERDERY

**What Was Socialism, and  
What Comes Next?**

By Katherine Verdery  
Princeton University Press  
298 pp., \$17.95





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change: The system's contradictions were far from the only source of socialism's collapse. She notes that systemic failure fostered bureaucratic factionalism and opened socialist states to the pressure of foreign debt. These two problems, along with post-industrial changes in the capitalist world economy, were also crucial factors in socialism's downfall. Yet even without these complicating factors, her model does usefully focus our attention on the structural constraints that shaped much of socialist life, and most of her analysis of specific aspects of socialist and post-socialist social existence builds on the understanding it affords.

One example of the strengths this model lends Verdery's work is evident in her analysis of nationalism. Even if we were to buy the facile but popular explanation holding that 'ancient hatreds,' kept in check by socialism but now unleashed, are responsible for the intense nationalism that has arisen in many post-socialist societies, we still need to understand how these hatreds could have survived the socialist period and its internationalist ideology. In reality, the ethnic identifications that would fuel later nationalisms also proved most useful, as Verdery demonstrates, in the shortage economy, where people used ethnic links to channel resources along unofficial paths. The paternalism of the redistributive system also laid some of the symbolic ground-

work for later nationalisms. Although state policies aimed at fostering gender equality did have some salutary effects—and while many socialist states in their hunger for adult labor did have good records of providing day care and making abortion available—the masculine imagery that surrounded the party-state in its provider role ultimately served to keep bourgeois gender notions current. In one of the book's most intriguing chapters, Verdery shows that these gender ideas have come to underpin nationalist imagery, in which men defend the female body of their nation even as they punish women for compromising the nation by abandoning their traditional roles.

While Verdery's general model of socialist society figures in all of the chapters, at times it takes a back seat to the sort of exploratory, data-driven approaches better suited to examining rapidly changing situations. In a fascinating study of the pyramid investment schemes that were wildly popular throughout Eastern Europe in the early 1990s, she shows how people draw on their understanding of the former workings of the planned economy to account for the way these "mutual aid games" can rapidly pay investors eight- or even twenty-fold returns on their investments. The games, they speculated, must be someone's plot, perhaps the Romanian government's, or the IMF's. The pyramid

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schemes also demonstrate how new and unexpected phenomena can provide people with opportunities to think about how their social lives are changing—specifically here, former socialists were getting a lesson in the economic value of circulation, demonized (and Gypsies and Jews with it) in socialism's productivist ideology. Furthermore, the pyramids stimulated a good deal of thought about the moral order of the emerging economy: Are unearned windfalls dirty or dangerous? Are greedy people the only ones who pursue them? As heartbreakingly parasitic as these games seem (and Verdery presents a chilling analysis of how the emerging "Mafioso" elites may be using them to bankroll their ascent by collecting for themselves the savings of the poor), the questions they have raised in popular discourse are undoubtedly important ones for people looking toward the salvation of the market to consider.

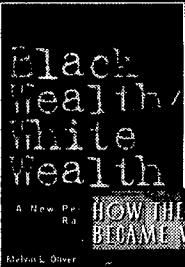
Verdery considers many other topics, including the politics that surround the subordination of the notion of civil society to that of nationalism in Romanian political rhetoric, the travails of land restitution and the possibility that the metaphor of a transition to feudalism might well reveal more of what is happening in Eastern Europe than one of a transition to capitalism. But in spite of the value of these analyses, some readers may find themselves wondering why Verdery never fully engages the second question posed in the book's title, giving us only the most chaotic picture of what it is that "comes next."

To her credit, Verdery is quite up-front about this prob-


lem. Early on in the book, she admits that "what comes next is anyone's guess." And even if this admission of prophetic incapacity may deflate some of the hopes raised by the title, it actually signals one of the book's strengths. Verdery is a social scientist, bent on describing socialist society and the transformations attending its collapse. Unlike many other social scientists, however, she does not indulge an impulse to become an amateur political theorist. Normative prescriptions are scarcely to be found in this book (an omission that should not be confused with a lack of sympathy for the past and current sufferings of the people with whom Verdery has lived and worked).

Instead, Verdery contents herself for the most part with the blanket observation that the rationalities underlying socialism and capitalism are both "stupid in their own way, but differently so." Ultimately, she begs off constructing a grand narrative about the transition with the claim that "teleological thinking has plagued the region for decades; perhaps we should abandon it." In other words, Verdery is honest about not knowing what comes next because her extensive knowledge of Eastern Europe's complexities has dispelled the naiveté of presuming that such knowledge is possible. Furthermore, one senses that she knows too much about capitalism to wager, as have so many others, that it is a horse likely to pay respectable odds for the majority of the region's people.

Joel Robbins is an anthropologist who has published articles in the journals *Social Analysis* and *Ethnology*.




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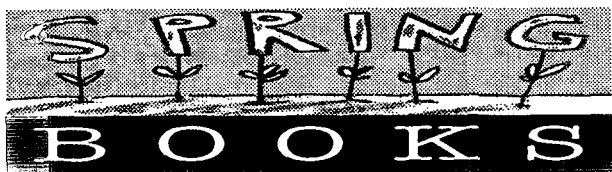
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## Ordinary people

By Franklin Foer

Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's fascinating and frustrating book *Hitler's Willing Executioners* has stirred anew an old controversy: Were Germans duped into passive support of the Nazi cause or were they enthusiastic collaborators? Always a touchy subject. Add Goldhagen's angry tone and his publisher's aggressive promotion, and it's no surprise that the book has received so much attention and provoked such strong responses. Before it even hit bookstores, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* was the subject of four *New York Times* pieces and about a dozen letters to the editor, many outraged condemnations of Goldhagen's conclusions.

Although his contribution adds to one of the most voluminous bodies of scholarship, Goldhagen's publisher boasts that the book "will transform our view of the Holocaust and Nazi Germany." It's true that Goldhagen's argument is bracing: "The inescapable truth is that, regarding Jews, German political culture had evolved to the point where an enormous number of ordinary, representative Germans became—and most of the rest of their fellow Germans were fit to be—Hitler's willing executioners." His prose oozes vitriol more than it congeals in any clarifying sort of way, but Goldhagen tells a pretty convincing story.

As fast and furiously as Nazi Germany mobilized for war, it could never muster the numbers to match its enemies' armies. And by the end of 1941, Germany badly needed soldiers on the Eastern Front to complete Operation Barbarossa, the apocalyptic invasion of the Soviet Union. So to free up manpower, the Army relinquished operations in occupied Poland to hastily recruited civilian Police Battalions. The newly armed and uniformed men sent off to Poland were hardly good soldier material. Too old and often unfit to be drafted as regulars, these were family men with middle-class jobs—just "Ordinary Germans."

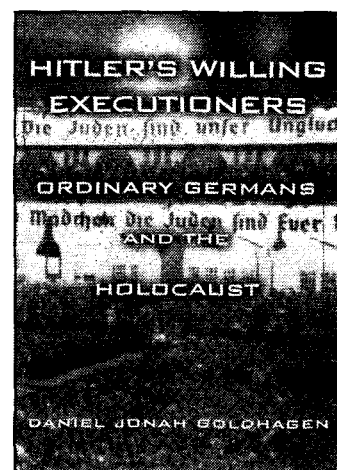
The 500 men in Police Battalion 101 got the call to go to Poland on June 20, 1942. Nobody ever bothered to give them much training, and higher-ups only passed along vague instructions about their missions. But this was the battalion's third tour in Poland, and within hours of their arrival they received orders to make the small town of Jozefow "Jew-Free." It was their first crack at mass execution. Before going ahead, though, the battalion's commander offered his men the opportunity to sit out the operation, no questions asked. None accepted.

Police Battalion 101 killed the 1,200 Jews of Jozefow in a gruesomely personal manner, with all the clumsiness and excitement of novices. Herding the Jews to a clearing in the forest outside the town, the Germans marched parallel to Jews in a single-file line. From afar it might have looked like a folk dance, with each killer moving in step with his victim. Because many of the Germans were unsure of the most effective way to put a bullet in their victim's head, they were often spattered with human gore themselves. Yet despite their sloppiness, they bore up remarkably well. Some even joked about their exploits at a feast that followed their day's work. Others took photos to preserve a record of their achievement for posterity.

Previous interpretations of the Holocaust, Goldhagen argues, cannot adequately account for the Police Battalions and the ease with which "thinking beings" possessing "moral faculties" could effortlessly, and sometimes joyfully, destroy human life. No study of the Nazis has taken into account the "identity" of the perpetrators and made a comprehensive attempt at setting them in their particular social milieu. Instead, studies of Nazism have operated from the assumption that "Germans were more or less like us," taking for granted that they are "rational, sober children of the Enlightenment, who are not governed by 'magical thinking' but rooted in 'objective reality.'"

Looking at Nazi perpetrators "with the critical eye of an anthropologist," Goldhagen finds wild and hallucinatory cultural axioms at the center of their worldview. In particular, he argues that a delusional anti-Semitism provided Germans with a powerful "cognitive orientation." Although Jews never made up much more than 1 percent of the German population during the 19th or 20th century, the hatred of them became "woven into the moral order" of German society.

Goldhagen traces the Holocaust's provenance back to German anti-Semitism's metamorphosis from a religious to a racist understanding of the Jews. The new, racist anti-Semitism that emerged in the late 19th century left no doubt "that the Jew was the source of, and was more or less identified with, everything awry in society." Now, even the liberals who advocated the so-called "emancipation" of the Jews did so in hopes that assimilation would purge Jews of their pernicious influence. And those who assumed



**Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust**  
By Daniel Jonah Goldhagen  
Alfred A. Knopf  
622 pp., \$30



that Jews themselves were somehow subhuman and should be treated as such increasingly drowned out the liberals.

Thus, when Hitler came to power, most Germans already implicitly agreed that the Jewish problem needed resolution. And when Hitler called for the elimination and ultimately the extermination of the Jews, ordinary Germans quickly mastered the leap in logic. World War II, with its "Bolshevik Jewish" enemies, provided Germans with the opportunity to convert their anti-Semitic ideology into genocidal praxis.

Although a historically specific chain of events enabled Auschwitz, Goldhagen argues that anti-Semitism was a necessary and sufficient cause for the Holocaust. And when it comes down to analyzing the motives of individual German perpetrators "a monocausal explanation does suffice."

Goldhagen claims his take on the Holocaust "reverses the Marxian dictum, in holding that consciousness determined being." Germany's pursuit of anti-Semitic policies broke all the rules of economic rationality and may have undermined the success of the German war effort. In passages filled with painful and horrific details, he describes the long death marches at the end of the war. Rather than leave Jews in concentration camps to be liberated by the Allied Armies, the Germans attempted to transport Jews deeper into Poland. Without giving the Jews sufficient clothing and hardly any food, the mid-winter marches served no German interest. It was ludicrousness and torture for anti-Semitism's sake.

Anti-Semitism hardly seems like a path-breaking explanation for the Holocaust. And it isn't. Lucy Dawidowicz's classic book *The War Against the Jews*, written some 20 years ago, eloquently makes the case that Germany's long history of anti-Semitism culminated in Auschwitz. Surprisingly, Goldhagen does not pay either Dawidowicz or the "intentionalist" interpretation of the Holocaust, which elaborated on Dawidowicz's position, the least bit of obeisance. Although Goldhagen draws on new evidence and uses his own idiosyncratic methodology, the book comfortably fits in this tradition.

This failure to acknowledge his scholarly precursors distorts the course of his argument. At times he seems to argue that Germany's unique breed of eliminationist anti-Semitism inevitably led to disaster: We can see the Holocaust coming from way back in the 19th century. It was just a matter of time before Germans stumbled upon their beloved gas chambers. However, I don't think this is what Goldhagen means to say. In his concluding chapters, he hedges and retreats from his relentless emphasis on anti-Semitism and admits that "Ordinary Germans did not leap to mass extermination on their own" and "Many factors were necessary for Hitler and others to have conceived the genocidal program." Unfortunately, Goldhagen's emphasis on his own originality forces these important caveats to the margins of the book.

In spite of the book's repetitiveness and length, Goldhagen might have usefully added several chapters. First, he never compares German anti-Semitism to the equally hateful versions of anti-Semitism that developed in other countries. Why, for example, didn't France or Poland ever engage in anything

close to the Nazi project? Second, Goldhagen needs to account more convincingly for the historical events that caused German anti-Semitism to become genocidal. If the political will existed for Germans to eliminate Jews from their midst, why did Hitler choose to wait until the middle of World War II to begin implementing the final solution?

Without a doubt, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* will spur controversy, much of which could well prove productive. Historians need to re-evaluate the place of anti-Semitism in their explanations of the Holocaust. Too often, historical accounts have discounted its importance. Confronted with anti-Semitism's pervasiveness throughout Europe, they seek the motive force of the Holocaust elsewhere (in bureaucracies, totalitarianism, etc). Goldhagen's powerful discussion of the Police Battalions and the death marches, which exposes the depth and virulence of anti-Semitism among ordinary Germans, should make such historians think twice. At the same time, Goldhagen's claims of originality and his sweeping criticism of "conventional interpretations" are hard to swallow. The history of the Holocaust has become an academic growth industry, pushing the study of the event in important new directions. Despite hundreds of attempts at a new interpretation, however, the field cannot seem to come up with anything much more convincing than the pioneering explanations offered by historians such as Dawidowicz. If we are lucky, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* will shake things up. ◀

Franklin Foer writes for *LinguaFranca*.

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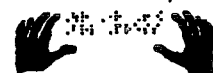
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Continued from page 48

smear campaign. Bud Konheim, CEO of Nicole Miller, a New York-based fashion design and manufacturing company, sparred with union panelists over this tactic. According to Konheim, UNITE shouldn't "legislate morality." Instead, Miller counseled, UNITE should train unskilled workers, creating a pool of highly skilled labor that would force retailers to compete on the basis of quality, putting sweatshops out of business. Nonplussed by union grievances, Konheim was evidently not so disturbed by organized labor's assertions of moral authority that he would disqualify it from shouldering the managerial task of training an entire workforce.

But while these and other confrontations among "production" panelists proved revealing, they were none too sexy. Ross' hoped-for synthesis, it seemed, would have to await the conference finale, which showcased such cultural studies paladins as Angela McRobbie, Paul Smith, Michele Wallace and McKenzie Wark. This gathering, titled "Culture and Policy," was clearly planned as the big draw. Yet while its initial turnout was impressive, the audience had thinned considerably by the time the panel wound down.

Why the disappointing reception? Perhaps, like me, conferees who had attended the "cultural" panels were wearying of meandering presentations that seemed incapable of sticking to the point of parsing production and consumption. Perhaps, like me, they noticed that the panelists' perspectives on culture sidestepped some provocative questions: Why not lash out at consumerism? Why is corporate culture (for some panelists, fashion's *haute couture*—Comme des Garçons, Armani, Prada) the only kind of "popular culture" worthy of attention? And why limit culture to fashion's frenzy of novelty? What of reflection, reconstruction or conservation?

Valerie Steele, a professor at the Fashion Institute of Technology, sat on another cultural panel, "Spectacle and Design," and her presentation on global fashion epitomized why the culture crowd seemed so unarresting. Steele began by disputing the claim that the fashion system is unique to industrial capitalism, or especially tyrannical and materialistic. Steele urged conferees to scrutinize critics like Guy Debord, and expose his work as a sham piece of agitprop theory. In Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*, you may recall, "the spectacle" encompasses all cultural representations of consumer capitalism; the final triumph of the "society of the spectacle" is the reduction of consciousness to a commodity.

Deploying what has become a standard sectarian epithet in the culture wars, Steele labeled Debord an "elitist." In Debord's theory-world, Steele charged, the spectacle duped consumers into uncritical prostration, while Debord inoculated himself against its seductions with the untainted perspective of the omniscient critic. Besides, Steele dropped in as an aside, Debord must be wrong about fashion since he "obviously didn't like to shop."

This quasi-populist line was short-lived, though. Steele jumped from Debord's shadow into the spotlight of the spectacle, rhapsodizing about the subversive chic of *haute*

*couture*. Regaling her audience with cultural studies' most tired, unproven thesis—that consumer culture breeds subversion—Steele was practically writing ad copy for Nike.

While Debord did sometimes lean on the shaky notion of "false consciousness," it's worth remembering that he never fell for fallacies as monstrous as Steele's. Indeed, whatever his excesses, Debord sought to challenge the society of the spectacle by fully reckoning with the nature of its power. He refused to regard it as a "progressive" force because he fathomed that consumption takes place in a society that offers few people any meaningful control over their productive lives.

"Don't fall into the pattern of demonizing fashion," Steele warned, in what she doubtless believed was a flourish of hermeneutic bravery. Attacking the fashion industry "will lead to an incorrect analysis of what must be done to eliminate exploitation," we were sternly lectured. Of course, it was difficult to discern from her own talk how Steele's analysis was any more "correct." All one was left to suspect is that critics like Debord—or campaigns like UNITE's—are somehow too earnest, too stuffy in their principled efforts to link up the fashion ethos of frantic obsolescence with global patterns of labor exploitation to be sufficiently fun or "sexy."

But come to think of it, not many of the culture panelists seemed all that nattily attired. And didn't Debord sport a pretty nifty fedora and a groovy pair of black sunglasses? ◀ John Palattella is an editor for special projects at *LinguaFranca*.



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By John Palattella

In 1994, Nike scandalized aging hipsters with a television spot featuring Beat novelist and junkie extraordinaire William S. Burroughs. Burroughs' gravelly voice and gaunt visage, a testament to a life cultivated underground, were neatly grafted onto the "Just Do It!" slogan to create an image of clean and mean rebellion, a peculiarly '90s embodiment of the American Way.

It was, of course, somewhat bracing to reflect that among the things Burroughs had "just done" was to gun down his wife on a south-of-the-border heroin jag. Nor was this the only cause to view Nike's hipster hucksterism with suspicion. About the same time, Jeffrey Ballinger sketched another, less coyly "subversive," portrait of Nike's New World Order in a *Harper's* magazine piece. Ballinger met up with Sadisah, an Indonesian woman then working in a footwear factory owned by the Sung Hwa Corp., a Nike subcontractor. Working six days a week, 10 and a half

hours a day, Sadisah earned the equivalent of \$37.46—less than half the retail price of one pair of the sneakers she assembled.

This dismaying combination of hipster hype and brutal exploitation drives much of the garment industry, and recently occasioned a two-day conference at New York University. Dubbed "Fashion Victims: Labor,



## Fashionably LAME

Spectacle and Policy," and sponsored by NYU's American Studies program, UNITE (Union of Needle Trades, Industrial and Textile Employees) and *The Nation*, the conference sought to establish a wide berth for cultural studies critiques of capitalism: Since fashion purveyors adroitly work all sides of the production/consumption continuum, resistance also needs to be waged on multiple fronts—among workers, organizers, journalists and academics.

Such, at any rate, was the theory, and members of all these critical constituencies turned out to lend a hand. Conference organizer Andrew Ross, NYU's American Studies director, concluded his opening remarks on a hopeful note about this coalition building, speculating that it could unravel a knotty question: "How can we learn to be sexy and politically correct at the same time?"

How indeed? Perhaps Ross hankered after a coalition cut from the same post-partisan cloth as *George*, the lifestyle magazine that comfortably plies dressed-up political gossip amid reams of fashion advertising. But

the conference participants discussing the problem of production didn't exactly rise to the hipness of the occasion. Instead, garment workers like Bertha Morales, whose job barely supports her existence, discussed the unglamorous themes of wages and hours. "We only have our work," Morales said, noting that New York's sweatshops deny workers job safety, the minimum wage, overtime and sometimes even a paycheck.

According to UNITE, retailers outsource work to foreign sweatshops, using the pressure of the global labor market to corner domestic contractors into running sweatshops of their own. Because labor is their only variable cost, domestic sewing contractors slash wages to remain competitive. Consequently, UNITE organizers reported, working conditions in domestic shops won't improve without combating conditions in foreign sweatshops.

To tackle this problem, UNITE and the National Labor Committee organize workers and orchestrate smear campaigns against retailers who contract with sweatshops. Last year, the campaign targeted the Gap's noncompliance with its own "workers' bill of rights"—a guarantee that contracted workers won't sew under sweated condition. The company proudly displayed copies of the document in American retail stores, but it remained untranslated and unknown to workers in its Caribbean sweatshops—until the Gap succumbed to the public pressure of the

*Continued on page 47*